

Indians start identifying Hajj fire victims

MECCA (AFP) — Indian officials on Sunday began the difficult task of identifying their nationals among the hundreds of pilgrims killed in a huge fire near the Muslim Holy City of Mecca.

George Joseph, an official at the Indian embassy, said ten Indians had been identified among the dead and 83 among the wounded so far. "We expect the number of those who died and those who were injured to be much higher, but we cannot provide an exact estimate," he said.

The counting process began Sunday as pilgrims headed for home after the week long Hajj to Islam's holiest sites with officials checking their names against lists of those who arrived in Saudi Arabia.

At least 343 pilgrims died and 1,537 were injured in the massive blaze Tuesday which swept through a

camp in Mina, just south of Mecca, according to an official Saudi toll. However, Indian officials fear that more than 600 pilgrims lost their lives in the inferno.

Most of the victims of the fire, started by a gas canister used for cooking, are believed to have come from India and Pakistan. The fire incinerated 70,000 tents.

Return flights to India were set to begin Monday but pilgrims had to check in at Jeddah airport, south of Mecca, 24 hours before their flight.

Mr. Joseph said 152,000 Indians were among the two million pilgrims in Mecca this year. "If a pilgrim is missing, first we have to ask his companions about his fate, perhaps he simply decided to go to Medina," Mr. Joseph said. "He could have been taken to a hospital because of an injury."

"It is difficult to know the

exact figure because the staff in the hospital are fully taken by the medical task and give little time to administration," he added.

In New Delhi, a Muslim priest from India's largest mosque accused Saudi Arabia on Sunday of trying to cover up the number of pilgrims who died in the fire.

Ahmad Bukhari, deputy priest at the Jama Masjid Mosque, added he would lead a fact finding team to Saudi Arabia if Riyadh failed to disclose the exact number of casualties.

"In case information of people still missing are not disclosed, then we could lead a team to Saudi Arabia," Mr. Bukhari said.

"The Saudi authorities are trying to hide the truth and this is adding to our worries."

"No one knows the exact situation out there," Mr. Bukhari said adding that Saudi Arabia had yet to per-

mit relatives of those injured to travel from India. "The Saudis should urgently pass on information to the thousands of relatives in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh," he said.

An Indian crisis centre set up here after the blaze put the number of Indian dead at around 150.

However, Indian officials in New Delhi said Saturday that more than 600 people had died in the fire that incinerated 70,000 pilgrims' tents.

Quoted by the United Nations of India (UNI), the officials said around 400 Indians had been reported missing, of which 250 were feared dead. It added that an estimated 200 Pakistanis had died in the blaze.

The Saudi authorities said the identification process had taken so long because many of their bodies were burned beyond recognition.



PALM SUNDAY: Lebanese Christians attend a procession in one of Beirut's suburbs for Palm Sunday, which celebrates the arrival to Jerusalem of Jesus Christ who was welcomed by people waving palm branches (AFP photo)

Ekeus: Iraq determined to keep capacity for weapons

CAIRO (AP) — Iraq is determined to retain its capability of producing weapons of mass destruction, the U.N. chief arms inspector said in an interview published Sunday.

Rolf Ekeus also accused some governments of pressuring his U.N. Special Commission, which was set up after the 1991 Gulf war to ensure that Iraq complies with Security Council resolutions.

Crippling U.N. sanctions were imposed on Iraq following its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. They will not be lifted before inspectors declare their satisfaction that Iraq has complied with orders to destroy its long-range missiles and mass destruction weapons.

"We've seen documents containing instructions from high authorities to

institutions and agencies requesting that the capacity to resume and complete arms programmes must be retained," Mr. Ekeus told the London-based Al Hayat in New York.

"Those who issued these orders feel that these weapons can be of major importance in certain circumstances," he said.

He did not elaborate, but the Security Council could use such a statement as a pretext to maintain the sanctions.

Asked to comment on repeated allegations in Iraq and elsewhere in the Arab World that he was carrying out U.S. government orders, the veteran Swedish diplomat said: "This is a false charge."

"I admit that some governments with global influence tried, in one way or

another, to give us advice or perhaps put pressure on us. But this should not worry anyone because we did not succumb to pressures... and we're proud of that," he said.

Mr. Ekeus, 62, is expected to leave the United Nations by July 1, and a respected Swedish newspaper has said that he will become Sweden's ambassador to the United States.

Washington is a vigorous advocate of keeping the sanctions in place. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has said that a change in Iraq's government "could lead to a change in U.S. policy," suggesting that the sanctions would remain as long as President Saddam Hussein is in power.

Iraq often hindered the work of the arms monitors,

he said. "Put these limited actions together and what we have is a pattern of intentions moving on a dangerous path," he told Al Hayat.

"We warn Iraq that if this pattern continues we shall have to declare that the monitoring system is not fully functioning. If we do this, it will be a dangerous development," Mr. Ekeus said.

Earlier this month, he said in Iraq that there has been a "serious deterioration" in Iraq's cooperation with arms monitors. In one incident, he said, Iraqi officials gave false directions to U.N. monitors trying to find a suspicious container they spotted during a helicopter overflight.

UAE to take anti-drug war to schools

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has decided to deploy clergymen and social experts on the frontlines of its war on drugs — in the schools.

The education ministry plan includes lectures and debates between the students and Muslim preachers, social experts and psychiatrists, Aysha Al Sayyar, a ministry assistant under-secretary, told Al Bayan newspaper on Sunday.

The programme will be launched during the coming scholastic year and will explain the hazards of drugs and the resulting social, ethical and psychological problems, she

said.

In addition, experts will meet with parents to identify any problems their children may have.

"The programme aims to reduce demand for drugs as this is considered the best means to combat drug offences and production," Ms. Sayyar said.

"It will include debates and lectures with the aim of strengthening the students' ethical values... the cornerstone in efforts to protect them from the imported evils, including drug addiction."

The programme is for private secondary school students, as government schools have already

introduced similar lessons, officials said.

The UAE has intensified a crackdown against narcotic offences following a surge in drug smuggling attempts and associated crimes.

Last year, it enacted laws meting out the death punishment against drug-traffickers and stiffening penalties against offenders.

It has also set up centres to treat drug addicts and promised to pardon those who turn up for treatment and to withhold their identities. More than 1,000 people have been treated at such centres.

The UAE has been hit hard by narcotics traffick-

ing with its long, poorly-guarded coastline and previously lax laws.

Police say the UAE is also a target because of its proximity to narcotics-producing countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran and because it hosts a large number of citizens from those nations.

"Another reason is the high per capita income in the UAE and its location as a transit point between South Asia and Europe," police experts said at a recent international conference on drugs in the Emirates.

Interpol and UAE police figures estimated more than 10 tonnes of

hashish, heroin, cocaine and other drugs have been seized in the oil-rich Gulf country over the past seven years.

Nearly 14,000 people, mostly from the UAE, Iran and South Asia, have been arrested in connection with drug crimes.

"The programme is also intended to create awareness about the hazards of smoking since it is the first step towards drug addiction," Ms. Sayyar said.

"Our main objective is to create a national element capable of pushing forward the development process in the future," she said.

Saudi authorities arrest 2 students returning from Iran, group claims

DUBAI (AP) — Saudi Arabia has arrested two Shiite Muslim theology students who returned from studies in Iran, a dissident group said Sunday.

In a statement faxed to the Associated Press, Al Haramain Islamic information centre said that Zaki Abu Al Saud and Ibrahim Hassan Al Sunni were arrested last week.

Both were studying theology in the holy Iranian city of Qom whose grand seminaries attract Shiite students of religion from around the Muslim world.

Saudi rebel groups and security sources have reported a crackdown by Saudi authorities on the

country's small Shiite minority following a June 25 truck bombing that killed 19 U.S. airmen at Al Khobar Towers military housing complex in the eastern city of Dhahran.

Shiites arrested in the crackdown are believed to have links to Iran, which has denied involvement in the attack.

Shiites, who make up about 17 per cent of Saudi Arabia's 12 million people, have long sought freedom to practise their religion. They also seek better job opportunities and social services in their impoverished villages, which are mostly in eastern Saudi Arabia.

In its statement, Al Haramain group accused Saudi authorities of acting on behalf of the United States for arresting the two students.

It said that Mr. Saud, 27, was "a prominent" Saudi cleric who was engaged in higher studies in Qom. The group did not give Mr. Sunni's age.

"The Saudi authorities have hurt Islam and Muslims by arresting one of the country's leading clerics," the group said in its faxed statement.

It said that Saudi authorities had imposed a travel ban on a number of Saudi Shiites who had gone abroad for religious studies.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

13:00 Astrix
14:15 Cartoon
15:00 French Programmes
16:00 Film — Someone to Love
17:45 Varieties
18:00 French Programmes
19:00 News in French
19:15 French Programmes
19:30 News headlines
19:35 Roseanne
20:00 Varieties (Arabic)
20:30 Film — In Country
22:00 News in English
22:25 Jewels/Best Seller (Part 2 of 2)
23:59 Opera — La Traviata Or The Wall (Rock music with Pink Floyd)
01:00 End of TX.

PRAYER TIMES

04:34 Fajr
05:56 (Sunrise) Dhuhr
12:34 Dhuhr
16:12 Asr
19:13 Maghreb
20:35 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweidieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Armenian International Church Tel. 827126
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Relative warm weather conditions will prevail and winds southwesterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be warm, winds southerly moderate, and seas rough.
Min/Max. temp.
Amman 14/29
Aqaba 19/35
Deserts 13/30
Jordan Valley 17/54

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mikhles Halash 5519220
Dr. Rubi Sukkar 856457
Dr. Ghazi Abu Shikha 753405
Dr. Fadi Al Khatib 865456
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asena pharmacy 637055
Nairokh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281484
Al Quds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Issa Al Omari 901266
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Dept. 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
J. Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Co. 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/52
Khalidi Maternity 644281/6
Akileh Maternity 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (RJ) (09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272775
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on

other flights can be supplied on phone 08 152700.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:00 Damascus (RJ)
08:15 Sanaa (RJ)
08:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
09:25 Jeddah (RJ)
09:45 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
10:30 New Delhi (RJ)
10:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:05 Beirut (RJ)
15:10 Sharm Al Sheikh (add) (RJ)
17:20 Cairo (RJ)
17:30 London (RJ)
17:40 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
19:30 Bangkok (RJ)
20:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:05 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
22:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
23:10 Casablanca (RJ)
23:15 Paris, Madrid, Aqaba (add) (RJ)
04:40 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
06:45 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
07:30 Brussels (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
10:30 Cairo (MS)
14:30 Bahrain (GF)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)
21:30 Tel Aviv (LY)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:20 Beirut (RJ)
11:00 Casablanca (RJ)
12:00 Sharm Al Sheikh (add) (RJ)
12:25 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
13:15 Cairo (RJ)
13:20 London (RJ)
13:35 Frankfurt (RJ)
14:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
15:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
17:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:00 Brussels (add) (RJ)
21:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
22:05 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
23:59 Damascus (RJ)
00:40 Sanaa (RJ)
00:45 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
01:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
06:15 Istanbul (TK)
06:20 London (BA)
08:45 Beirut (ME)
11:20 Cairo (MS)
15:00 Bahrain (GF)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
22:50 Tel Aviv (LY)
23:55 Damascus (AF)
02:30 Amsterdam (KL)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.
Apple 700/500
Banana 600/600
Banana (imported) 950/700
Cabbage 130/70
Carrot 300/150
Cauliflower 180/100
Cucumber (large) 250/130
Cucumber (small) 400/220
Eggplant 200/120
Fava beans 350/200
Garlic (Green) 350/250
Grape fruit 230/160
Lemon 670/400
Marrow (large) 250/120
Marrow (small) 400/250
Onion (green) 230/130
Onion (dry) 400/200
Orange 500/350
Peas 550/350
Pepper (hot) 570/400
Pepper (sweet) 650/400
Potato 430/200
Spinach 240/150
String beans 750/450
Tomato 310/140

HIAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Eastern Amman to receive its own 'sports city' — Abbadi

AMMAN (Petra) — Amman Municipality will soon embark on the construction of a "sports city" in eastern Amman with a seating capacity suitable for at least 5,000 spectators, Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi announced Sunday.

In an address to the Amman and Philadelphia Rotary Clubs, Dr. Abbadi described the project, to be constructed on 100 dunams of land, as the municipality's gift to the Ministry of Youth and the Amman sports clubs.

The municipality has heretofore constructed 10 small sports

grounds for the benefit of sports clubs, which also have been receiving financial subsidies and plots of land on which to construct facilities and shopping areas to generate income.

The sports city is one of a series of projects which the Amman Municipality is anticipating this year to benefit youth, Dr. Abbadi maintained.

Currently, the Amman Municipality is involved in the execution of the first phase of a ring road, including tunnels, within the Amman region.

This road is designed to ease congestion in the capital and

will be implemented in conjunction with the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications, Dr. Abbadi explained.

He also affirmed that the municipality will soon announce a tender for the construction of a waste treatment plant and that a German firm has recently concluded a feasibility study pertaining thereto.

The municipality is currently exploring a suitable site to construct the plant which is to be financed through a number of grants and a loan, he said.

In order to stimulate cultural activities, the municipality is

willing to offer a plot of land on which to build an opera house in Amman, Dr. Abbadi said.

The mayor also stressed the municipality's willingness to refurbish the Roman Amphitheatre in downtown Amman however, he added that arrangements will have to be made with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities which is responsible for the archaeological site.

Dr. Abbadi stated that he envisages Amman as a cultural capital which might benefit future generations in Jordan as well as the Arab World.

'Jordan instrumental in IPU criticism of Israeli actions'

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordanian delegation to the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) meeting held last week in Seoul was instrumental in placing the issue of the city of Jerusalem on the conference agenda, Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Saad Hayel Srour said here Sunday.

Arab East Jerusalem.

The conference, attended by 600 deputies from 117 nations issued a statement at the end of the five-day conference criticising Israeli government plans in Arab territories as illegal and a major obstacle to peace.

Last month, the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sent bulldozers to begin clearing the ground for the settlement, sparking violent clashes between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers.

Mr. Srour told Jordan Television that the Jordanian delegation played similar roles in the IPU's previous meetings in

Istanbul and Beijing but that its efforts at the time were unsuccessful towards including Jerusalem in the meetings' respective agendas.

In its statement, the IPU described Israeli plans to modify the character and identity of Jerusalem and its institutions as illegal and requested their immediate cessation.

It also constructed a follow-up committee to report on the situation in Jerusalem in its Cairo meeting, scheduled to be held in September.

Upon the conference's adoption of the resolution denouncing the Israeli actions, Mr. Srour maintained that the move

reflected the international community's support for a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Auxiliary to the IPU meeting, the Jordanian delegation contacted other delegations to prepare for an international meeting, to convene in Amman in June, to discuss attempts by certain groups to denigrate Islam, Mr. Srour said.

He stated that the Amman meeting will be attended by parliamentarians from other Islamic nations.

The majority of the delegations have responded positively, Mr. Srour concluded.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

*"Les Spécialistes" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabel Weibdeh at 8:30 p.m.

PLAY

*Swiss comedy "Cases of Hunger and Love" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

LECTURE

*"A 90-Minute History of the English Language" by Dr. Nicholas Linfield at the British Council, Jabel Amman at 5:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

*Works by Lebanese plastic artists at Hamourabi Arts Gallery, Street 5536098, until April 24.

*Exhibition of frescoes of Jordanian mosaics and Fayum portraits by Dorothy Mango at the Jordan Arts and Crafts Centre/Artisana, Jabel Amman, Second Circle (Tel. 647858), until May 10.

*Exhibition by the San Francisco-based Palestinian-American architectural photographer Said Hisham Nusseibeh entitled "The Farthest Mosque," at Darat Al Funun, Jabel Weibdeh, until May 8. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

*Paintings by Vian Shamounki at the Jordan Plastic Art Association, Jabel Weibdeh, until April 25 (Tel. 623297).

*Paintings by Yassin Al Mohamadani at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 681303), until April 28.

*Paintings by Patricia Chatelain at the French Cultural Centre, Jabel Weibdeh, until April 27.

Save water — every drop counts!

NEWS IN BRIEF

King Fahd sends reply cable to King Hussein

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Sunday received a reply cable from King Fahd Ben Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, thanking him for his sincere condolences over the death of 350 pilgrims as a result of the fire which broke out in Mina early last week.

Jordanians visit tourist sites in Kingdom

AMMAN (Petra) — More than 250,000 Jordanians visited tourist sites in the Kingdom and mainly the Jordan Valley during the 'Eid Al Adha holiday, according to Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji Sunday. The minister said that ministry teams had been working to clean the tourist sites at Wadi Sheib, Sweimeh and Zay as well as the shores of the Dead Sea previous to the inception of the holiday.

Pilgrims on way home from Hajj

MECCA (Petra) — Jordanian pilgrims who performed Hajj rites in Mecca this year have started on their trip home and some have reached Medina en route to Jordan, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadi announced Sunday. The minister affirmed that medical teams which accompanied the pilgrims have heretofore attended to 10,000 cases of illness among both Jordanian pilgrims and those of other nationalities during their stay in Mecca and Medina. Dr. Abbadi confirmed that no Jordanian was among those impacted by the huge fire which killed more than 350 pilgrims and injured 1,500 others.

King Hussein Bridge to close today

AMMAN (Petra) — The King Hussein Bridge will be closed for two hours today, according to Public Security Department sources. The sources stated that the bridge will be closed from 7 to 9 p.m. due to the Israeli observance of the Jewish holiday of Passover.

Hot weather to continue today

AMMAN (Petra) — The country will continue to be affected today by khamisni weather conditions, causing a rise in temperature and poor visibility in the east and south, according to Department of Meteorology sources. The department estimated today's temperatures in Amman and the hilly areas as rising to 29 degrees centigrade during the day and dropping to 14 at night.

Separation of powers proposal triggers constitutional debate

By Francesca Ciriaci
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A long-running debate among mainstream and opposition politicians and intellectuals, on whether to introduce amendments to Jordan's 45-year old Constitution, has been given a new momentum through His Majesty King Hussein's repeated calls for a separation between the state's executive and legislative powers.

As in all parliamentary democracies, Jordan's constitutional system provides for a separation between the judicial, legislative and executive branches.

After maintaining that "The Nation is the source of all powers" [Article 24, paragraph (i)], the Constitution vests the legislative power in the National Assembly and the King (Article 25), while "the Executive power shall be vested in the King, who shall exercise his powers through his Ministers in accordance with the provisions of the present Constitution" (Article 26).

Article 1 of the Constitution states that Jordan's "system of government is parliamentary with a hereditary monarchy."

While providing the structural frame that Jordan be a parliamentary democracy, the Constitution also implies that the government should be the expression of the parliamentary majority, since such majority should reflect the Nation's will.

Therefore, the Constitution does not bar deputies from holding ministerial posts, and a double mandate (parliamentarian and ministerial) to the same person has characterised many past governments.

In his letter of designation to Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on March 19, the King wrote: "Through experience, we found that having deputies serving as ministers is something that has several negative aspects, as the citizens themselves have also discovered... This calls for a review of the issue. A deputy should devote his time to his parliamentary responsibilities, and a minister should devote his time to his ministerial responsibilities, without having any of them falling under electoral, geographic or personal pressure, no matter what their causes or results are."

Out of 31 ministers in the in the previous government of Abdul Karim Kabariti, 22 held seats in the Lower House of Parliament. But, with elections approaching, the current government of Prime Minister Majali counts in its ranks only two deputies of the last 12th legislature: Deputy Prime Minister for Services and Minister of Administrative Development Abdullah Ensour, deputy for the Balqa region, and Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Tawfiq Kreihan, deputy for the Ma'an district. In a move widely seen as a response to the King's letter of designation to the new government, Dr. Ensour this week submitted his resignation from the Lower House in a letter to House Speaker Saad Hayel

Srour. According to Article 74 of the Constitution, "a minister who intends to nominate himself for elections shall resign at least 15 days before the beginning of nominations."

According to the 1986 Law of Election to the House of Deputies, amended in 1993 with the introduction of the one-person, one-vote system and endorsed by the Lower House in January, candidacy for membership in the House of Deputies shall start 25 days before the day designated for the election. Adding these 25 days to the 15 mentioned by the Constitution, it appears that a minister should resign at least 40 days before elections are held if he/she intends to run for Parliament.

But the separation between ministerial and parliamentary mandates envisaged by the King goes beyond the merely procedural resignations to be handed by ministers intending to run for Parliament and aims at becoming an established practice for all governments to follow, and not only the one in charge of supervising the general elections.

Urging Dr. Majali to keep the executive divided from the legislative, the King said "this would better serve our democratic process and help it take root and protect it from its right deviation."

In an interview with Jordan Television a few weeks before Mr. Kabariti's resignation, the King had already expressed his desire to enforce the separation between the executive and legislative functions of the state.

"His Majesty's view is supported by the overwhelming majority of the people, who would want such separation," commented former minister Ibrahim Izzeddine in a recent interview with the Jordan Times.

Though in other democracies, ministers hold parliamentary seats and such a double mandate is considered by the political scientists as one of the pillars of parliamentary democracies. "It is not any more a matter of academic discussions, but one of political realities," said Mr. Izzeddine, also a former ambassador and current director of the Abdul Hamid Shoman Foundation.

Complaints on the current practice of the double mandate have focused on the fact that the inclusion of deputies in the cabinet for the sake of winning their vote of confidence in Parliament weakens the government, since most deputies have very little technical experience.

It also weakens the legislative role as a "watchdog" over the government, as deputies are unlikely to oppose the decisions they themselves have already endorsed as ministers.

In his interview with Jordan Television, the King also said that "evidence and clues show that there should not be deputies holding ministerial portfolios. A deputy's duty should be to monitor the govern-

ment's performance and to devote his time to serving the cause of development and to follow up on legislation."

A former prime minister, Ahmad Obaidat, stressed the importance of a "checks and balances" mechanism to regulate the relation between Parliament and government and supported the appointment of "technocrats" to the cabinet.

"Especially in certain positions, technocrats could speed up the reform process, restoring the people's trust in the state's institutions," he said.

Many of the 23 ministers in the new Majali government are deemed technocrats, by virtue of their professional past.

To name just a few, Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs Jawad Anani has long worked for the Central Bank as economic researcher and head of both the financial and research and studies departments; Minister of Foreign Affairs Faysal Tarawneh has been a member of delegation to the Arab-Israeli peace talks and served as ambassador to Washington until his appointment as minister; Minister of Tourism Akel Biltaji has worked for Royal Jordanian (RJ) for 28 years and was most recently RJ's vice-president for investments; and Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi has worked as media advisor to the King and has much experience with various media, including the BBC World Service, Jordan Television and Radio, Radio Holland and Al Qabas Kuwaiti daily.

The last legislatures and recent governments breached the people's trust in the state's institutions, as parliamentarians and ministers were too often just pursuing their self-interests," Mr. Obaidat contended, adding that, "in light of our past experience, we need to establish new practices."

In an interview with the Jordan Times, Mr. Obaidat suggested the appointment of technocrats "as a starting measure to reach a real balance of power between the executive and legislative bodies of the state, and convince the people that the institutions are still trustworthy."

Mr. Obaidat, who headed the 60-member Royal Commission that drafted the National Charter, said "the National Charter was just a step in the democratic march. But now, in light of internal and international political changes, we feel it is time to introduce constitutional amendments to give new momentum to the democratic process."

According to Mr. Obaidat, "the balance among the three powers of the state, (legislative, executive and judiciary), as it should be in a state of law, is crucial to the establishment of a real democracy," and it was one of the principles inspiring the National Charter, drafted in 1990 and promulgated in 1991.

Like other constitutional amendments proposed by the National Charter, the separation among the three functions of the state has remained on paper for too long. Mr. Obaidat lamented.

Secretary General of the

Reawakening Party and a member in the 12th legislature Abdul Ra'ouf Rawabdeh had predicted that the new government would not include deputies and supported the measure.

In a recent interview with the Arabic daily Al Dustour, Mr. Rawabdeh also called for "a comprehensive change and administrative reform aimed at altering the administrative process and the structure of the state."

He said that the division between parliamentary and ministerial work is an essential element of the democratic process and a predisposing factor for party work. He even suggested that some political leaders might decide not to run for Parliament as they are eager to carry on their party commitments.

As for relations between the executive and the legislative branches, Mr. Obaidat pointed to the "imbalance between Article 42 of the Constitution, limiting the requirements needed to be appointed minister to solely Jordanian nationality, and Article 75, listing eight different circumstances in which one cannot become a deputy."

Article 42 reads: "No person shall be appointed a Minister unless he is a Jordanian."

On the other hand, Article 75 of the Constitution stipulates that "No person shall become a Senator or Deputy: who is not a Jordanian; who claims foreign nationality or protection; who has been adjudged bankrupt and has not been legally discharged; who was interdicted and the interdiction has not been removed; who was sentenced to a term of imprisonment exceeding one year; who has a material interest in any contract... with any Department of the Government... who is insane or an imbecile; who is related to the King."

Among the advocates of constitutional amendments, outspoken President of the Jordanian Engineers Association (JEA) Leith Shbeilat stressed the need for introducing measures to strengthen the "parliamentary" character of the Jordanian system.

Though Jordan is commonly defined as a parliamentary monarchy, "there is nothing parliamentary, and what exists in Jordan does not fulfil the requirements of a parliamentary system," Mr. Shbeilat said in a recent interview with the U.S.-based Al Watan newspaper.

"Since 1989 and until now, I was one of the first to publicly call for constitutional amendments that would restore our regime from the practice of totalitarian regimes to the practice of a parliamentary monarchy where Parliament is the first and principal partner to the monarchy," he told the Jordan Times.

Calling for a "real and effective" parliamentary life that shoulders responsibilities and creates rulers who can ensure social justice," Mr. Shbeilat said he would favour an alliance with Mr. Obaidat, depending on "how far he (Mr.

Obaidat) is willing to go with constitutional amendments."

While some reformists and opposition leaders advocate constitutional amendments on the grounds that the 1952 Constitution is inadequate to meet the needs created by internal and international social and political developments, others maintain that the Kingdom's supreme legal document, as "complemented by the National Charter," provides the necessary legal and institutional framework for Jordan's democratic march.

Rather than amending the Constitution, said Mr. Izzeddine, it suffices for the time being to reverse to the 1952 original version of the document, abrogating all amendments introduced during the era of martial law, 1957-1991.

"The infrastructure of democracy and civil society is there. What we need is to orient ourselves to enter the 21st century through reforming the administration and preparing our society to accept the changes deriving from the introduction of a free market economy," he explained.

The powers of the government, which has been for long "the only functioning institution," are in the process of being "delegated to the civil society, through both the democratisation and privatisation processes," he said.

"New forces are rising: industrialists, international traders, political parties and professional unions. On one hand, the government is trying to keep the power it still has and, on the other hand, new forces are trying to push for the implementation of the reforms on their agenda," Mr. Izzeddine asserted.

In addition to balancing the powers of the state, advocates of constitutional amendments point to the need for a stronger reference in the Constitution to human rights, which they see as limited to the five words of Article 7: "Personal freedom shall be guaranteed."

"Birthrights, such as freedom of movement, right to one's own privacy in all forms, and freedom of speech and association should be specified," Mr. Obaidat said.

But the most important addition proposed to Article 7 would entail that "any violation of the citizen's freedoms should be deemed as a crime and compensation should be paid to the victim."

In a paper circulated in 1995, former senator and Higher Court of Justice Judge Najib Rashdan publicly called for amendments strengthening Article 7 and stipulating that any infringement on public liberties is a crime and that violators should be punished.

Restrictions to the state of emergency, in the form of a law defining the criteria under which it can be declared and specifying its duration should also be introduced, according to Mr. Obaidat. "Parliament should be empowered with the ratification of the declaration of the state of emergency," he added.

Mr. Obaidat also suggested that restrictions are needed to Article 34, sub Article 3, of the Constitution, merely stating that "the King may dissolve the Chamber of Deputies," without indicating duration, reasons, and procedures for the suspension.

The Council of Islamic Organisations and Societies (CIOS) in Jordan recently issued a statement calling for restrictions to Article 33 of the Constitution as well.

The Article gives the King the authority to declare a state of war and sign international treaties and agreements, reading: "The King declares war, concludes peace and ratifies treaties and agreements."

"The declaration of war... (and), the signing of treaties between two incompatible parties or forced on one country by external pressures are too important to be made the responsibility of one man," said the statement, signed by CIOS Secretary General Abdul Latif Subaihi and probably alluding to the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.

The fact that "such large responsibilities and grave decisions fall on the shoulders of one single man, even if he is at the top of the ladder... contradicts the spirit of the Constitution," the statement continued.

The need for redefining the executive powers was strongly rejected by Mr. Izzeddine, who said that "the same powers are given to all heads of state in any country" and cited as a guarantee mechanism the fact that "all his (the King's) orders have to be co-signed by the prime minister, or the competent minister, to be enforced."

Mr. Izzeddine and Mr. Obaidat, however, agree on the need for a constitutional court, envisaged by the National Charter but never finalised so far, and the extension of the Parliament's ordinary sessions, currently lasting, according to Art. 78 of the Constitution, four months.

A Constitutional Court is provided for by Article 3 of the second part of Chapter two of the National Charter, as one of the "basic pillars of a State of Law." It should make "final and binding decisions on all state bodies and individuals," and rule on the constitutionality of laws and decrees.

Nonetheless, other parts of the National Charter have been implemented, Mr. Izzeddine said, citing the 1992 Political Parties Law and the 1993 Press and Publications Law, inspired by the National Charter.

As for the extension of the ordinary sessions of the National Assembly, "prolonging the Parliament's annual sessions would not only be in line with the democratic path, but also with the norm in the rest of the world," Mr. Obaidat said, suggesting year-long ordinary sessions.

On the other hand, Mr. Izzeddine told the Jordan Times he would favour three three-month ordinary sessions, with a one-month recess between each session.

N. Korean defector says mission was to block war

SEOUL (R) — Wearing what looked like a bullet-proof vest, North Korean defector, Hwang Jang-Yop arrived in South Korea Sunday amid intense security and declared his mission was to stop Pyongyang from launching a war.

Mr. Hwang, Pyongyang's top ideologue and the most senior official to betray his Communist homeland, flew from the Philippines with an aide after an escape via Beijing.

South Korean fighter jets escorted their Air Philippines Boeing 737 in to land after a tense flight fraught with fears that Pyongyang may try to intercept the airliner.

Mr. Hwang and his aide, Kim Duk-Hong, flung their arms into the air three times and shouted "Man Se" — Korean for "hurray" — as they emerged from the chartered plane.

Mr. Hwang, 74, was once a confidant of Pyongyang leader Kim Jong-il. He and Seoul officials hope he will spill secrets that could give them insights into the state of mind of the North Korean leadership as it grapples with famine.

"I came to South Korea because I am convinced the only way out is to block war by joining hands with brothers in the South," he told

reporters in a voice breaking with emotion after landing at a military base near Seoul.

"North Korea seems to think there is no option but to use the powerful military force it has built up over decades."

Later, as he ducked into a black Limousine to be whisked to a "safe house", the outline of what appeared to be a bullet-proof vest showed beneath his dark blue business suit. An ambulance was part of his convoy of vehicles.

"Maximum security was arranged for the arrival. We didn't take any chances," said a spokesman for the agency for national security planning, the Domestic Intelligence Agency.

Mr. Hwang was spirited to Seoul amid uncertainty over the future of inter-Korean peace talks offered by U.S. President Bill Clinton and his South Korean counterpart, Kim Young-Sam.

North Korean diplomats Saturday failed for the second day to turn up at a meeting in New York scheduled to hear Pyongyang's response to the offer of talks to close the books on the 1950-53 Korean War.

The war ended with a new-forging armistice.

In an effort to keep their initiative from collapsing,

the Americans and South Koreans persuaded the North Koreans to hold lower-level contacts. A U.S. official held out weak hope that the three sides could meet Monday.

Mr. Hwang and Mr. Kim were accompanied down red-carpeted stairs from the plane to the tarmac by a Philippine general.

They defected in Beijing on Feb. 12 and had been in the Philippines since March 18 in a secret location due to Manila's fears of Pyongyang hitmen.

"A country which boasts it has built a heaven on Earth has turned into a nation begging for a living," Mr. Hwang said in a statement broadcast live on television, referring to North Korea appeals for food aid to ease starvation.

It was the first public glimpse of Mr. Hwang since he walked into a South Korean embassy compound in Beijing. The defection embarrassed China by forcing it to choose between an old socialist ally and a new capitalist friend.

Seoul's Foreign Ministry thanked Beijing and Manila for their roles in Mr. Hwang's flight.

A ministry spokesman said South Korea "highly recognises the Chinese government, which treated his

defection in accordance with international law and procedure."

Philippine President Fidel Ramos, relieved the defector was gone after a month in his country, said he hoped "peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula will be positively served by this encouraging turn of events."

Manila officials said the cloak-and-dagger operation was fraught with danger. "It's risky, very risky," Philippine Foreign Secretary Domingo Siazon said in a radio interview.

"Anything can happen during the three hour flight," another Philippine official said.

Mr. Hwang and Mr. Kim were presented with bouquets by wives of two prominent defectors living in the South.

In his statement, Mr. Hwang said North-South rivalry was not between socialism and capitalism, but "a confrontation between war and peace."

Referring to the family he abandoned — and who almost certainly face a life in prison, or even execution — Mr. Hwang said: "I could not disobey the order of my conscience."

"All those I love put together cannot be traded for the life-and-death fate of the 70 million people of our race."



North Korean defectors Hwang Jang-Yop (left) and his longtime aide Kim Duk-Hong throw their arms into the air in a victory salute after emerging from the doorway of a chartered aircraft which brought them to South Korea from the Philippines on April 20. Mr. Hwang said he fled to South Korea to try to prevent North Korea from launching a war (Reuters photo)

Clashes continue despite pledges from leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan

BAKU (AP) — Azerbaijan and Armenian forces clashed Saturday along the countries' border and near the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, prompting emergency telephone talks between presidents of the two nations.

Azerbaijani defence officials said the clashes were the most serious since the two countries signed a truce three years ago.

Azerbaijan's Defence Ministry said Armenian forces using anti-tank guns, grenade launchers and light weapons began firing on Azerbaijan territory Friday night from Nagorno-Karabakh in the third such attack this week, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported.

A military official in Baku, the Azerbaijani capital, said that early Saturday, Armenian troops also attacked Azerbaijan positions from the Tush region of Armenia, the Interfax News Agency said.

The region is located along the northern part of the border, about 110 kilo-

metres northeast of the Armenian capital Yerevan.

Suffering a number of dead and wounded, the Azerbaijanis returned fire, the report said.

The Armenian Defence Ministry, in turn, accused Azerbaijan troops of opening machine-gun fire on Armenian army positions in the Tush region. It said a number of civilians were wounded.

ITAR-TASS reported. The sides usually ignore each other's claims of attacks or blame each other for starting the violence.

The clashes prompted Presidents Levon Ter-Petrosian of Armenia and Geidar Aliyev of Azerbaijan to hold emergency telephone talks early Saturday. The two leaders agreed to "observe the ceasefire and try to avoid incidents," Mr. Ter-Petrosian's press service said in a statement Saturday.

The two former Soviet republics are locked in a bitter nine-year-old dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountainous enclave inside

Azerbaijan but populated by ethnic Armenians.

A truce signed in 1994 ended a war that killed 15,000 people and turned about one million into refugees, but peace talks have remained in deadlock. Armenian forces presently control most of the enclave and some land inside Azerbaijan.

The 1994 ceasefire has largely held out but sporadic clashes have continued. Last week, the Armenian Defence Ministry said its troops killed seven Azerbaijanis gunmen who tried to cross into Armenia.

The two countries have also agreed to return war prisoners and civilian hostages.

Five Armenian civilians held in Azerbaijan were flown home Saturday by a Red Cross plane, the relief organisation said in Geneva.

Armenian officials say the last five Armenian POWs still in Azerbaijani hands may soon be exchanged for five Azerbaijanis held in Nagorno-Karabakh.



Actress Brooke Shields and tennis star Andre Agassi were married Saturday in a quiet ceremony in the small chapel of St. John's Episcopal Church in Monterey with about 100 friends and family members present. The two are pictured during the opening of the Official All Star Cafe in Las Vegas on Dec. 14, 1996 (Reuters photo)

Brooke Shields, Andre Agassi tie the knot

MONTEREY, California (R) — Actress Brooke Shields and tennis star Andre Agassi were married Saturday in a quiet ceremony in a small chapel with about 100 friends and family members present.

Shields, a child model who went on to be one of Hollywood's darlings of the 1970s and 1980s and who foresook stardom to study at Princeton University, wore a white gown with a long train.

She is currently starring in the NBC situation-comedy series "Suddenly Susan."

It was the first marriage for both Shields and Agassi. After the ceremony the couple held a reception at the Posh Stonepine Resort in nearby Carmel Valley, where they had booked all 12 luxury cottages and the four-star restaurant for the occasion.

The wedding ceremony was conducted by

Roman Catholic priest Father Charles Gard, a friend of Shields' family, at St. John's Episcopal Church, located on the Del Monte Golf Course, California's oldest golf course.

A member of Shields' family told reporters they chose the church because of its beauty. The couple were escorted down the aisle by three bridesmaids wearing gold, blackless dresses and Shields, with her blonde hair combed straight back, smiled as she prepared to take her wedding vows, guests at the ceremony told reporters.

Shields, 31, who found stardom as a teenager, most notably for her role in the 1980 movie, *The Blue Lagoon*, and Agassi, 26, once ranked the World's No. 1 tennis player, were engaged for two years before their marriage.

Timothy Leary to take ultimate trip — into space

MADRID (R) — Timothy Leary, the 1960s guru of LSD and 1990s icon of the Internet, will take the ultimate trip when his ashes are blasted into space with a Spanish satellite.

The cremated remains of Leary, whose final request before dying was for "one last far-out trip," will be launched into orbit with those of "Star Trek" creator Gene Roddenberry and 22 other space enthusiasts for the world's first space funeral.

"This is a way for people with a fascination with outer space to participate in the opening of the frontier and connect with the star-filled night sky," said Chan Tysor, president of Celestis, the Texan company organising the venture.

The ashes, secured in sealed vials, will piggyback a mission to send Spain's first satellite into orbit via a Pegasus rocket to be launched over the Canary Islands Monday.

The lipstick-sized capsules containing seven grammes of remains will be released into space and will orbit the Earth for anywhere between 18 months and 10 years before gravity pulls them back into the atmosphere where they will burn up in a flash of light.

Family and friends accompanied the ashes of their loved ones to Madrid Friday before they were transported to the Canary Islands for take-off.

"Timothy had always been a space pioneer and wanted to travel into space and now he has the opportunity," said Carol Rosin, a close friend of Leary who was by his side when he died of prostate cancer aged 75.

China and Russia to embark on their second grand alliance

BEIJING (AFP) — China will embark on its second attempt at a grand alliance with Russia Tuesday when President Jiang Zemin heads to Moscow to cement warming ties between the giant neighbours.

In a clear indication of both nations' high expectations, Russian President Boris Yeltsin will break his spring vacation to meet with Mr. Jiang, and China has permitted foreign journalists to accompany the delegation for the first time.

"The coming summit will be of great practical significance for the in-depth growth of bilateral ties, the promotion of world multipolarisation and the establishment of a just and rational new order," Mr. Jiang said ahead of his departure.

"Both countries advocate the abandoning of 'cold war thinking' and the establishment of a new security concept that will have universal significance," he said during an interview granted to Russia's ITAR-TASS news agency.

China and Russia have gone to great pains to define their growing relationship as a "constructive partnership," different from their strong ideological alliance of the fifties.

But with increasing Rus-

sian arms sales to China and a slated troop reduction agreement to include the former Soviet states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, an attempt to tweak the U.S.-China-Russia power triangle also appears on the cards.

"Neither Russia or China can match the post-cold war superpower status of the United States, but they can work together to counter its influence," a European diplomat said.

"They are clearly ready to put aside differences at present to create an alliance of sorts aimed at more balanced power distribution, and the point has not been lost on Washington," he added.

The first grand alliance between Beijing and Moscow in the fifties, when the Soviet Union sent thousands of experts to build up China's industrial base, collapsed in 1960 with the frosty Sino-Soviet split that lasted through the next three decades and led to a number of border skirmishes.

In his upcoming visit to Moscow, Mr. Jiang is scheduled to sign a five-nation border troop reduction treaty to deal with China's 8,000 kilometre northern border, as well as a declaration with Yeltsin on how the post-cold war political

world should function.

But economic cooperation with Russia — which remains strong in the sometimes troubled Sino-U.S. relationship — has yet to flourish to the levels one might expect from their warm overtures.

Much-discussed projects, such as a gas and oil pipeline from Siberia to China, are still on the drawing board.

Although 1996 trade figures show a 25 per cent increase to \$6.85 billion, China's exports to Russia rose only marginally to \$1.7 billion.

Russian exports to China meanwhile soared to \$5.15 billion — with most of the two-way trade in military, not civilian, goods.

China recently ordered 72 Sukhoi SU-27 combat aircraft from Russia and has already taken delivery of 48. It has also bought S-300 anti-aircraft missile systems and two destroyers.

The strong military component of the growing relationship was underlined Friday in Beijing when visiting Russian Defence Minister Igor Rodionov stressed bilateral military cooperation and the "converging approaches" of Moscow and Beijing on security questions.

Peru interior minister quits, admits security lapses

LIMA (R) — President Alberto Fujimori named Gen. Cesar Saucedo Sunday as interior minister after the resignation of Juan Briones, who admitted security lapses that allowed rebels to storm the Japanese ambassador's home and hold 72 hostages since December.

Mr. Briones and police chief Ketin Vidal, who also resigned Saturday, faced mounting criticism over the failure by the security services to prevent the dramatic assault by Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) guerrillas on Dec. 17.

"We recognise that there were security lapses in the takeover of the Japanese residence," Mr. Briones told reporters.

Mr. Saucedo previously served as commander of the second military district which includes Lima.

Mr. Fujimori, for whom the crisis has become the toughest challenge of his political career, had said "heads will roll" once the hostage crisis was finally resolved.

The hostages have been held for 123 days in the residence since the dramatic takeover by Marxist rebels during a plush cocktail party.

Three of the hostages, who appeared to be Japanese, came out of the rear of the building briefly Saturday and took tables and chairs from the garden into the house, said witnesses.

Fresh controversy arose Saturday around talks to free the men following the government's surprise decision this week to expel a top Red Cross official who had worked closely with the hostages and their families.

International Committee of the Red Cross officials said Juan Pedro Schaefer, the organisation's number two in Lima, left Peru Wednesday at the request of the government.

There has been no official explanation for his expulsion. "We are sending a high-level representative to Lima next week to try to find out what it is all about," said Ruben Ortega, an ICRC spokesman in Geneva.

The Red Cross' top man in Peru, Michel Minnig, is a member of the three-man guarantor's commission which is overseeing talks between the government and the rebels.

The negotiations have reached an impasse over the guerrillas' demands to free around 400 of their jailed comrades. Mr. Fujimori has ruled this out publicly, but sources have said he may consider releasing some lower-ranking MRTA members.

In a new demand Friday, the rebels called for urgent medical treatment for 30 seriously ill MRTA inmates in top security Peruvian jails.

The list, sent to Reuters in a statement, included MRTA leader Victor Polay campos and New Yorker Lori Berenson, sentenced in 1995 to life imprisonment for involvement in a plot to capture congress.

The MRTA has repeatedly tried to use the hostage crisis to draw attention to what it calls inhuman conditions for Peruvian prisoners convicted under special anti-terrorism legislation, calling the cells where they are kept "tombs."

China struggles to undo past destruction of forests

NANNING, China (AFP) — Li Shihui was not even born when Mao Tse-tung launched his great leap forward in 1958, but he lives every day with the disastrous campaign's legacy of environmental destruction and poverty.

"We cut down a lot of trees in 1958, mostly to feed the steel furnaces," Mr. Li, 27, said on a steep hillside overlooking Xingxian village, just 20 kilometres from this southwestern provincial capital.

In an ill-conceived drive to make China a steel-making power overnight, Mao exorted millions to fire up primitive backyard furnaces across the country.

Though they only succeeded in melting down household metal items into tonnes of useless pig-iron, the ovens burned vast quantities of wood — and according to World Bank documents, China has only recently begun a long

process of recovering from the resulting deforestation.

With help from the bank, villagers have covered many of the long-barren hills around Xingxian with Caribbean Pine and Eucalyptus Saplings — forming a collectively owned timber plantation headed by Mr. Li.

The plantation is a beneficiary of a 200-million-dollar World Bank loan project aiming to create 900,000 hectares (2.2 million acres) of new forests in China — some commercial and some purely to protect the environment.

Mr. Li said his village is counting on the trees to lift them out of poverty when the investment comes to fruition.

While the eucalyptus and pine trees take six and 20 years to grow, respectively, the only source of income for 300 residents is some seven hectares (16 acres) of rice fields, he said. "That is a very small amount of land per person, so the vil-

lage is very poor," said Mr. Li, holding a coarse straw hat in both hands.

He estimated each resident only earns 700 yuan (\$84) per year.

Timber harvested annually from the plantation — also funded by the Guangxi provincial government — will be worth up to 1.7 million yuan by its 20th year, he said.

Under the terms of the deal, a government-owned pulp mill will buy the wood.

Tom Tsui, a World Bank official handling China, said poverty alleviation was built into the loan project.

"Basically, these farmers are taking advantage of the opportunity provided by the World Bank, the paper mill and market demand today," he said.

Before the plantation was set up, the hillside land was not

providing the village with any income, he added.

Mr. Li said no annual crops were planted there, because the land would have to be terraced or prepared in other ways that require start-up capital.

"We just had no money to invest," he added.

China has only 0.11 hectares (0.27 acres) of forest per capita, or one-seventh world average, reports from the bank say. Plantations account for 25 per cent of its forest area but only five per cent of standing volume, as most are newly planted.

Beijing estimates its forest coverage at 13.6 per cent of its territory and has a stated goal of raising the figure to 15.3 per cent by 2000.

But the bank says China's demand for timber is outpacing supply growth, causing a loss of 500,000 hectares (1.2 million acres) of forest per year.



A U.S. Coast Guard boat patrols in downtown Grand Forks, North Dakota, to clear the area of the burning security building (at back) so that a plane can make a drop of a fire-fighting chemical. Firefighters were unable to reach the fire hydrants as the Red River flooding continues (Reuter photo)

U.S. river city evacuates in face of massive flood

GRAND FORKS, North Dakota (AFP) — More than 8,000 people were evacuated from this river city over the weekend as residents and National Guard members struggled to stave off catastrophe from a flooding Red River.

With the failing of Grand Forks' strategic downtown dike along the Red River, authorities moved about one-fifth of the eastern North Dakota town's population of 50,000 to four emergency shelters set up on an air force base and three colleges outside the city, officials said.

City firefighters were unable to battle a blaze that broke out in a large downtown building because there was no pressure in the water mains, Cable News Network (CNN) television reported.

A tanker airplane flew

over the building and dropped water over the flames while officials awaited the arrival of a special coast guard team armed with high-power pumps, CNN reported.

Officials closed the bridge over the Red River linking Grand Forks to its sister city, east Grand Forks, in neighbouring Minnesota.

One-third of the streets were under water as the swollen Red River poured over and through protective dikes.

"I want to assure the people of Fargo and Grand Forks that our thoughts and prayers are with them during this very difficult time," President Bill Clinton said in a statement late Saturday.

Authorities issued an immediate evacuation order for the area at 5 a.m. (1100 GMT), Sergeant Rob Keller

of the North Dakota Army National Guard told AFP.

For the first time in the state's history, Serg. Keller said, the Red River was maintaining a crest almost 160 kilometres long between Wahpeton and Grand Forks as it flowed north to Canada.

Weather officials said the river was expected to peak at 16.2 metres before midnight as rising temperatures melted ice jams in the numerous tributaries flowing into the Red.

Regular flood level is set at 8.4 metres, officials said. The water was expected to remain high for another four to five days.

Using four-tonne trucks and humvees, 350 National Guard members were helping residents leave the area, advising them to take only vital medications.

The National Guard also was working against time to remove the carcasses of 1,000 cattle that had been driven into icy streams by the last winter blizzard, two weeks ago.

As temperatures rose to the 16-degree Celsius (60-degree Fahrenheit) level over the weekend, the carcasses threatened to pollute the warming streams.

A total 110,000 cattle have perished in North Dakota because of the unexpected blizzard and floods, which are also being blamed for the deaths of seven people.

Serg. Keller said the blizzard wreaked \$21.5 million in damage to farm buildings, while the floods have inundated 1.7 million acres of farmland.

No statistics were available for statewide flood damage.

Bulgarian reformists cruise to parliamentary majority

SOFIA (R) — With almost all results counted from Bulgaria's parliamentary election, the reformist Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) was set for a comfortable majority enabling it to push through tough but vital economic reforms.

The Electoral Commission said Sunday the UDF and its coalition allies had won 52 per cent of the votes cast, which would give them 136 or 137 seats in the 240-member parliament.

Their victory seals the rejection of the ex-Communist Socialist Party in Bulgaria, a process begun with the election of President Petar Stoyanov on the UDF ticket in November.

The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), toppled in February by UDF-led mass protests, had controlled almost all of Bulgaria's nine governments since the end of one-party rule in 1989.

UDF leader Ivan Kostov said the new government's four priorities would be carrying out reforms agreed with the International Monetary Fund, fighting organ-

ized crime and corruption, opening secret police files of public figures, and bringing Bulgaria into the European Union and NATO.

With nearly 98 per cent of the vote counted, the Socialists had 22 per cent of the vote or 57 seats and three smaller parties were also set to enter parliament. Final results are expected Tuesday.

"Today the big winner is the nation," said an editorial in Standard. "It gave the UDF all the power so the leaders of the Democratic Forces should keep that in mind and listen more carefully to the voice of the people."

Mr. Stoyanov indicated Saturday night that he expected the UDF parliamentary group to nominate Mr. Kostov as prime minister.

"In every country after a decisive victory of a certain political force its leader becomes prime minister," he said.

Troud daily advised Mr. Kostov to show humility and rigour, and to avoid the mistakes of former Socialist

Prime Minister Zhan Videnov, who resigned last December. "First, to listen to his people and to respect others. Second, not to think that he's unique or irreplaceable," the paper advised.

Bulgaria is starting belatedly along the path of market reform already followed by many other former East Bloc states.

A restrictive fixed exchange rate regime is due to be introduced in June to instil monetary discipline and restore confidence in the lev currency, which went into free fall in January while Bulgaria was without effective government.

Saturday's turnout, at 58 per cent, was the lowest for any election since the end of one-party rule in 1989, but the election results had been seen as almost a foregone conclusion.

Three smaller groups were set to enter parliament. The Union for National Salvation Coalition grouping ethnic Turks and monarchist organisations seeking the return of exiled King Simeon had 7.5 per cent so

far, comfortably above the four per cent threshold and giving them 20 seats.

They are joined by the Euroleft, a new movement set up by Socialist dissidents, with 5.5 per cent and 14 seats, and the Bulgarian Business Bloc, led by maverick populist George Ganchev, with 4.95 per cent and 12 or 13 seats.

An interim cabinet led by Sofia's popular UDF Mayor Stefan Sofianski has run the country since February, winning pledges of \$1.2 billion from international lenders and kicking off the reform process the new government must continue.

Mr. Sofianski has said he wants to complete his mandate as mayor, but is expected to return to national politics at a later date.

After Communist leader Todor Zhivkov was toppled in 1989, leading Communists reemerged as the Bulgarian Socialist Party and continued in government. The UDF won elections in 1991 but their coalition with the ethnic Turkish party collapsed after only 11 months.

Sinn Fein calls for votes in U.K. polls

MONAGHAN, Ireland (R) — The IRA's political wing Sinn Fein began its annual conference Sunday with a call for votes in Britain's May 1 election to force the next London government to invite it to peace talks.

"Every vote for Sinn Fein increases the pressure on the incoming British government to engage in a process of real and credible negotiations involving all of the parties," Sinn Fein's chief negotiator, Martin McGuinness, told delegates.

"These are crucial elections in which Sinn Fein can change the political landscape of this country for ever," he said.

Sinn Fein, which shares the Irish Republican Army's goal of ending British rule of Northern Ireland, is barred from Belfast peace talks because of the guerrillas' ending of a 17-month ceasefire in February 1996.

The Irish, British and U.S. governments have all refused to talk to Sinn Fein since the IRA attacks and have vilified the party for its failure to get the guerrillas to restore their ceasefire and end violence for good.

But Mr. McGuinness said Sinn Fein was confident of winning up to three parliamentary seats in the British election, which would confront the British and Irish governments with refusing to negotiate with democratically elected representatives.

"A strong mandate for Sinn Fein at the forthcoming elections will make it extremely difficult for either government to ignore our democratic right to represent our electorate in negotiations," he said.

"A strong mandate for Sinn Fein will reverberate throughout the corridors of power in Dublin, London and Washington as well as European capitals."

"It will bring untold pressure to bear on the incoming British government and the Irish government to engage in a credible process of inclusive peace negotiations," he said.

Mr. McGuinness made no mention of the party's policy of refusing to occupy seats it wins in the British parliament because it would entail allegiance to Britain which it sees as the illegal colonial ruler of Northern Ireland.

Nor did he make any hint of a new IRA ceasefire but said only that Sinn Fein wanted the Belfast talks "to take place in a peaceful atmosphere."



Amber Carrillo of Oklahoma City Saturday leaves a memorial for her father Michael Carrillo, who was killed in the Oklahoma City federal building bombing, on the fence during a memorial service marking the second anniversary of the bomb blast that killed 168 people. The names of the victims were read aloud and the families were allowed to place flowers inside the fenced off area at the site (Reuter photo)

Oklahoma City marks 2nd anniversary of bombing

OKLAHOMA CITY (R) — The pealing of church bells broke 168 seconds of silence, one second for each of the dead, Saturday as hundreds of mourners gathered to mark the second anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing.

Family members and survivors bowed their heads and wept as they remembered those who died in the April 19, 1995 blast that ripped apart the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

The period of silence began at 9:02 a.m. CDT (1402 GMT), the moment when the massive truck bomb exploded in the worst civilian bombing attack in U.S. history.

The second anniversary of the bombing came just a few days before opening arguments were expected to begin in the trial of bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh in Federal Court in Denver.

Prosecutors charge that Mr. McVeigh and former army buddy Terry Nichols blew up the Murrah building to avenge the deaths of an estimated 80 Branch Davidians in an FBI siege at their Waco, Texas compound exactly two years

before. The two were said to hate the U.S. government.

The silence at the ceremony was interrupted by the chilling sound of an ambulance racing through downtown Oklahoma City. A flyover of military jets soared across the brilliant blue sky in the missing man formation.

Mourners placed flowers on the grassy field where the Murrah building once stood as the names of the dead were read one-by-one in a grim reminder of the human toll of the attack.

This year's ceremony was more subdued than that of the first anniversary in 1996, with fewer people in attendance and less media coverage. But family members said their sense of loss was undiminished.

"We feel a need to mark this day. We need this to need the hugs," said Kathleen Treanor, whose daughter and parents-in-law were killed in the blast.

Janie Coverdale, whose grandsons, Aaron and Elijah, were among 19 children who died in the bombing, said sometimes she still thinks that the two boys are alive. "It will take a long

time (to heal)...We have to keep this alive in other people's minds," she said.

For others, the memories of the tragedy brought back by the ceremony were too overwhelming. Stephen Hull, who helped give emergency treatment to bombing victims, walked away while the names of the dead were read.

"I just can't listen. I thought I could come down here after two years and deal with it a little bit more. I thought I was stronger than this," he told Reuters. "It's just a tough, tough day."

President Bill Clinton sent a letter to the family members and survivors in which he said the nation "will never forget that tragic day" and praised the courage of the people of Oklahoma City.

In the bombing's aftermath, he said, "our nation proved once again that no force of hatred or terrorism can ever defeat the American spirit."

Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating, in a speech at the ceremony, said the trial would "reopen old wounds for many, but it will also mark an end. Today, we pray for justice."

Ball in Mobutu's court as direct talks offer withers

KINSHASA (AFP) — Prospects of face-to-face peace talks between rebel leader Laurent Kabila and Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko dimmed Sunday following Kabila's public vilification of the head of state as a "Satan" who had to go.

Mr. Mobutu, who was meeting Benin President Mathieu Kerekou in Kinshasa Sunday, has made no immediate reply to what observers say is an ultimatum from the rebels designed to smash a face-saving exit for the embattled president.

In a public meeting before 20,000 people Saturday in rebel-held Lubumbashi, Zaire's second-largest city, Mr. Kabila said the only subject to be discussed was Mr. Mobutu's resignation.

"Mobutu must negotiate with me on the conditions of his departure. He should give up power, give up his army, put down the arms so there can be a peaceful transfer of power," Mr. Kabila said.

The rebel leader, whose forces now control half of Zaire after six months of fighting aimed at ending Mr. Mobutu's 32-year reign, pledged to continue the offensive until the capital Kinshasa falls. He predicts that will happen by June.

It was Mr. Kabila's first public appearance in the capital of the mineral-rich Shaba province — now reverted to its old name, Katanga — since it was taken 11 days ago, the rebels' biggest prize yet in their mili-

tary campaign.

Mr. Kabila's words rebuffed Mr. Mobutu's agreement in principle to an encounter with the rebel leader at the request of South African President Nelson Mandela.

Mr. Mobutu's special advisor Honore Ngbanda Nzambo, said Friday that Mr. Mobutu had accepted Mr. Mandela's invitation, but practical details on time and date remained to be sorted out.

But, given also the rebels' refusal to declare any ceasefire before talks, the chances of an encounter appear remote.

Later Friday, the Zairean government called for a "complete and immediate cessation of hostilities."

Mr. Mandela's spokesman was more confident, saying Mr. Mobutu could meet Mr. Kabila in Cape Town "in the first part of next week, probably Monday or Tuesday."

Mr. Nzambo had said the cancer-stricken Mobutu, 66, would categorically not be discussing stepping down or going into exile.

And, he said, Mr. Mobutu would stand as a candidate at any future presidential elections organised in Zaire. In Washington, the U.S. State Department urged dependents of embassy staff in Zaire to leave, and warned its nationals against all travel to the country.

Troops from Belgium, France and the U.S. are on standby to evacuate foreign nationals from Kinshasa.

Patten says China does not trust Hong Kong

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten said Sunday China did not trust Hong Kong and was intent on tightening its grip on the territory once it reverts to Chinese rule at midnight on June 30.

Mr. Patten's remarks follow the announcement of curbs on protests in Hong Kong and a ban on foreign funding for political groups, which the territory's future leader Tung Chee-hwa has vowed to introduce.

"The decision seems to be based on their wish to have a tighter control over life here. They don't — they should but they don't — they don't yet trust Hong Kong," he said as a weekly columnist on a local radio programme.

Mr. Patten said China's plan to introduce a multi-seat, single-vote electoral system in 1998, departing from the current single-seat, single-vote formula, was designed to exclude pro-democracy figures.

The electoral system for the 1998 polls, the first after

Hong Kong's handover, is rapidly emerging as a new arena of polemics in Hong Kong, following a quarrel over China's plan to dissolve the current elected legislative council and appoint an interim chamber on July 1.

"The real reason for advocating a multi-member single seat system is, as I said in 1993, to reduce the number of pro-democracy candidates who can get elected," Mr. Patten said. "Today 17 out of the 20 geographical constituencies are represented by pro-democracy candidates. For some that is the beginning and the end of the argument," he said.

He urged Hong Kong people to speak their minds on changes to the electoral system. "I do hope that Hong Kong will be given the chance to speak out on this," he said.

Hong Kong, a British colony for more than 150 years, reverts to China as a quasi-autonomous region under a treaty allowing its capitalist system to continue for 50 years.

British election rivals lock horns over Europe

LONDON (R) — Election rivals locked horns Sunday over Britain's role in Europe with Prime Minister John Major accusing Labour leader Tony Blair of surrender in advance.

But the opposition parties said open civil war had broken out in the ruling Conservative party over how much sovereignty should be conceded to Brussels.

The latest opinion polls in the run-up to the May 1 election showed Labour with a lead of 14 to 19 points over the Conservatives.

Mr. Major, who has adopted a "wait-and-see" stance over Britain joining a single European currency, said Mr. Blair had surrendered his negotiating position in advance — if he is British

leader at the June European Union summit in Amsterdam.

"No credible politician about to enter into a negotiation with other people would hand over all his negotiating cards in advance in the way Mr. Blair has done. It is an absurdity," Mr. Major told the Sunday Telegraph.

The Conservatives last week depicted Mr. Blair as a ventriloquist's dummy on the knee of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in a campaign advertisement that party grandees were swift to condemn.

In his six-and-a-half embattled years as premier, Mr. Major has been constantly dogged by Conservative party mutinies over Europe with his own stance becom-

ing increasingly Eurosceptic.

Sunday media reports said pro-European Finance Minister Kenneth Clarke would be keen to join any contest to succeed Mr. Major should he step down after the election.

On the Eurosceptic wing of the badly divided party, he could face challenges from Defence Secretary Michael Portillo and Home Secretary (Interior Minister) Michael Howard.

Labour, which has dropped much of its socialist dogma in a bid to win crucial middle class votes, believes it is now poised to end 18 years in the political wilderness.

Finance spokesman Gordon Brown said Conservative splits over Europe

meant that the race to succeed Mr. Major had already begun.

Mr. Brown said the Conservatives were "a party in civil war...incapable of governing."

His accusation was echoed by Paddy Ashdown of the centrist Liberal Democrats who told BBC television: "The Conservatives are in open civil war with themselves."

But leading Eurosceptic Howard was quick to taunt Mr. Blair over Europe, telling GMTV: "The things which we know Tony Blair would sign up to — the surrender of the veto, more majority voting, the social chapter — would put us firmly on the federal path, firmly on the path to a federal European super state."

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1974.

Chairman of the Board of Directors:
MAHMOUD AL KAYED

Director General:
MOHAMMAD AMAD

Editor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

Telephones: 684311, 699634
Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO

Facsimile: 696183

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times advertising department.

Opportunity for progress

BY ITS own admission, the U.S. is saying that it was unable to bridge the major gaps between Israel and the Palestinians despite the latest efforts of its special envoy Dennis Ross. "Significant work remains to be done between the Israelis and Palestinians," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said in the wake of the conclusion of Ross' visit to Israel and Gaza for talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. Even initial reports of agreement to hold talks on security cooperation between the two sides, which Burns hailed as an important breakthrough, were dashed when a Palestinian official denied that there was any agreement to restart the suspended cooperation.

Ross' exploratory talks in Israel and Gaza were also overshadowed by the Bar-On affair that hit the Israeli body politic. Until the Israeli house is put back in order, the prospects of serious peace negotiations resuming between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) appear dim. With Benjamin Netanyahu poised to fight the fallout of the scandal, the stage is set for a political skirmish between the Likud-led government and the Labour Party opposition. With the battle for political survival uppermost on his mind, the Israeli prime minister cannot afford to engage the Palestinian side in serious peace talks especially one of the accelerated kind that he has floated recently.

In the meantime, it is doubtful that President Bill Clinton, under the circumstances, will exert any form of pressure on Israel to force it to create the right atmosphere for the resumption of the talks. But this waiting period may be disastrous for peace itself. The PNA cannot afford a prolonged suspension of the talks given the mood of the Palestinian people and the sense of frustration and despair that was generated by the new political climate in Israel. The same applies to Israel which stands to lose politically and economically from a frozen peace process.

The American administration, therefore, needs to address the question of whether Netanyahu and his radical partners in the Israeli government deserve a truce or not. Whether Netanyahu is guilty of political wheeling and dealing and a sell-out to the far-right is something for the Israeli justice system to decide. But that he is guilty of sabotaging the peace process goes without saying. And since the U.S. alone is responsible for the success or failure of peace in the region, Washington should take the opportunity to put more pressure on the Israeli establishment to relent to the will of the international community. The Middle East cannot be held hostage to the ambitions of one man or the designs of Israeli radicals and fundamentalists.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

WITH THE initialing of the Jordanian-European partnership agreement, the Kingdom has entered a new phase of political and economic development, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily Sunday. Politically, the agreement opens the door for bilateral cooperation in matters related to the Middle East peace process and security, in addition to cultural affairs, while economically, the accord is bound to open the door for European technical and economic assistance to Jordan and the marketing of Jordanian products in Europe on a wide scale, noted the paper. But, it said, it should be emphasised here that only if the Jordanian goods are up to internationally accepted standards and catering to European specifications, they can compete with foreign products on the European markets. Only good-quality agricultural and industrial products, sold at competitive prices, can secure a place in the European markets, something that makes it imperative for the Jordanian producers to take immediate steps to cater to the requirements of international trade, the paper added. Furthermore, since the agreement provides for the Europeans to invest in Jordan, it will be quite necessary for the government and other concerned parties to create the opportune climate to attract investors, the paper pointed out. It said the partnership agreement is bound to help Jordan's entry into the World Trade Organisation if the Kingdom rises to the occasion and meets the requirements that would ensure its integration within the global economy.

A WRITER for the weekly Al Majd expressed fear that the high charges and the limited range of medical services at private hospitals will finally drive them out of the Jordanian market. Ahmad Nimri said that within five years 29 new private hospitals started operation in Jordan, but few of them are charging reasonable rates from the public, the majority of who are limited-income groups who cannot afford such high rates. Operational costs are high since they entail not only the employment of highly skilled medical teams but also the cost of equipment and medicine which continue to rise, forcing the hospital owners to continue increasing their rates, said the writer. In light of this situation, the private hospitals, the majority of which are small size, fail to offer integrated medical services to the public, he added. The writer said that should some of these hospitals be forced to close down, the nation as a whole stands to lose due to the loss of vast investments.

Economic Review

WTO — the arrogance of power

NOT ONLY is the behaviour of the so-called free trade scions protectionist, it is also hypocritical and arrogant. Upon reviewing some of the recent incidents in international trade, one wonders if history will repeat itself and if the West, which brought the mercantilist view to the world over four hundred years ago, will ever grow wiser, if not more civilised.

It is a well-known and documented fact that the U.S. is the country that killed the International Trade Organisation (ITO) in 1948 because the Congress believed then that the yet to be born organisation would have given the U.S. president greater powers to interfere in the internal workings of the states of the union. Consequently, the U.S. refused to sanction the ITO, which died at birth as a result, and the world had to do, for almost fifty years, with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which was simply an agreement and not an organisation. (As a result, it was not until 1993 that the world was able to have an international trade organisation).

It is also a well documented fact that when the Uruguay Round was in the process of establishing the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the president of the U.S. had, again, in his grasp the making or breaking of the only international organisation that would offer a forum to deal with international trade issues. The first major case dealt with by the WTO was between the U.S. and Japan and there the WTO was in the classic position of being between a rock and a hard place. Its dispute settlement mechanism, supposedly one of the greatest achievements of the Uruguay Round, was being put to the test. The case at hand was the Japanese auto industry whose biggest fault was making great cars that competed with U.S.-made cars at home and abroad.

The U.S. wanted the Japanese to voluntarily restrain their exports to its market. (They had done so before, so why not do it again). The Japanese economy, which was suffering from rising unemployment (an alien concept to the Japanese till the late eighties) and stiffer competition from European car makers, was not willing to accommodate the U.S. request.

If the U.S. won, the world, especially the developing nations which had entered in mass into the WTO in the late eighties and early nineties after having shunned the GATT as "the rich-country club," would have taken this as a failure of the WTO, like the GATT before it, to stand up to the U.S.; had Japan won, the U.S. Senate would have given Clinton a hard time about joining the WTO, which meant killing it like the ITO, and would have imposed unilateral tariffs on Japanese cars. This would have violated Article I (Most Favoured-Nation Treatment), Article II (the promise not to raise tariffs) of the GATT 1994, and Article 23 of the WTO (Understanding on Rules and Procedures for the Settlement of Disputes). Luckily the conflict was resolved in favour of the U.S. as the Japanese withdrew their position, voluntarily agreeing again to reduce their car exports to the U.S. (to the detriment of the U.S. consumer) and the WTO did not lose face.

The ministerial meeting which was held in Singapore in December 1996, a once every two years event, saw several manoeuvres by the developed countries, headed by the U.S., to push for greater enforcement of environmental measures and the provision of more human rights in the developing world. This is all noble and fine. In fact, the developing nations need to improve their human rights record and if the developed nations can help in this respect, all the power to them. However, there was a catch.

The WTO provides what is known as positive measures

to help implement better environmental controls in the developing countries. These measures include the provision of technical and financial aid to help the developing countries so that their standards can match those of the developed world. The U.S., on the other hand, underscored what is known as negative measures, which entail the imposition of punitive measures on countries that have little or no environmental controls by imposing tariffs on their goods or banning their entry into the U.S. market. In other words, several of the developed countries wanted to protect their markets through the environment.

Had the U.S. succeeded, the developing countries would have had to spend heavily on the environment, thus increase the cost of production and lose part of their cost advantage. Otherwise, they would have had to face the wrath of the U.S. which would have had it well within its rights to impose trade sanctions on them.

Similarly, in the area of human rights, which the U.S. is presently championing, the demands of the U.S. may be viewed as cost increasing and destructive of any cost advantages the developing nations may have. Again, the U.S. wants developing countries to improve the working conditions for labourers and harmonise standards across the world. However, such an act would elevate the cost of production to the developing countries and harm their export industries. In other words, they would lose their comparative advantage in labour-intensive production, and the production of textiles and agricultural goods (two areas which the U.S. and EU would love to protect forever) for export purposes in the developing world would become taboo.

On April 14, 1997, the U.S. and the EU finally reached an agreement regarding a very pressing issue. The U.S. had made two pieces of legislation (Helms-Burton Act, and the D'Amato Act) that forbade companies to trade with or invest in Cuba, Iran and Libya, and imposed punishment on them for doing so. Many EU companies have violated these laws and some of them, that have interests in the U.S., have already suffered some backlash. Therefore, the EU complained through the Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSU) of the WTO and questioned the consistency of these laws with the principle of free trade, which the WTO espouses. This did not go well with the U.S., so it threatened to boycott the WTO's dispute panel. The two giants settled their affairs in-house, with the U.S. promising the EU to work until Oct. 15, 1996, on ways and methods of protecting European firms from these laws. Or course, companies of other countries will not enjoy such privileged handling and will suffer the U.S. anger. Executives of companies that deal with Cuba may not be allowed in the U.S. and their companies will not be allowed to do business in U.S. It is a secondary boycott.

In short, the mighty can still do as they please and the WTO remains not the answer to all, but to some. Furthermore, to those of us who argued, and still do, for the benefits of free trade, there is no escape from joining the WTO.

Jordan will have to join, not just because practically the whole world is a member right now, and not because free trade will increase the Kingdom's competitiveness, but because if Jordan stays out of the WTO, it will not have a forum in which to defend its trade rights and consequently may become subject to discriminatory acts without having access to a recourse. Moreover, the fact that a powerful nation will tend to abuse its power is not new to humanity. What really is irking is that these countries tend to behave in the manner of a camel which cannot see its hump. Will Jordan ever enjoy the power and ability to use the justice of the mighty? I wonder.

Musical chairs at the U.N.

By Gwynne Dyer

THE EXPANSION of the United Nations Security Council, formally put on the agenda late last month by General Assembly President Ismail Rizali, will have two predictable effects. The Security Council will become so unwieldy that real decision-making moves elsewhere. And the international community will be convulsed for years by struggles to get the (largely meaningless) new seats.

The latter process has already begun. Recently, South Africa's President Nelson Mandela went to New Delhi and signed a joint declaration with Indian Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda to bring "democratic reform" to the U.N. Security Council. "We do not accept a few countries dictating to the world by exercising the veto power," said Mandela afterwards. "We want countries, big or small, to have an equal say on global issues."

Fine words, but do Mandela and Deve Gowda really want Barbados (population 275,000) to have the same influence on the world's affairs as South Africa (pop. 45 million) or India (pop. 950 million)? Of course not.

If you truly want "global democracy", then either all 184 U.N. members should have an equal vote (and we abolish the Security Council) or else, every million people should have one vote at the U.N. (and we abolish the Security Council). Mandela and Deve Gowda show no interest in either of those propositions.

So did Mandela go to New Delhi just to mouth some platitudes in public? Not at all. He went to forge an alliance with India over the

new permanent seats on the Security Council.

India is the world's second most populous country (after China), so it would seem a safe bet for a permanent seat on the expanded Security Council. However, its main Asian rivals for that seat, Indonesia and Pakistan, are both Muslim countries.

Pakistan and Indonesia together have only one-third of India's population — but the current plan could easily produce an expanded Security Council on which there was still no Muslim permanent member. So New Delhi can imagine a scenario where the 40-odd Muslim member countries of the U.N. voted to boost Indonesia or Pakistan into the "Asian" permanent seat instead. Even India needs allies, therefore — and South Africa is an obvious candidate.

Africa will also get just one new permanent member — and South Africa, as the only industrialised country south of the Sahara, wants to be the one. Ethiopia has as many people, but is very poor. Nigeria has twice as many people, but a military regime. The only rival that really worries Pretoria is Egypt.

Egypt is Arabic-speaking and predominantly Muslim. It is really part of the Middle East. But technically it is in the African continent, so if the Muslim countries put all their votes behind one candidate, their choice could also fall on Egypt.

That could spoil South Africa's chances as much as an Indonesian or Pakistani candidacy could spoil India's, so the Indo-South African alliance was almost inevitable. And that is just a foretaste of the deal-making and back-stabbing that will

be unleashed by the plan to "democratise" the Security Council.

The plan to enlarge the Security Council was formally unveiled late last month. The present five permanent members — the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France — would be joined by five others: Germany, Japan, and one country each from Africa, Asia and Latin America. And the current ten non-permanent members, who are elected for two-year terms, would grow to fourteen.

The total membership of the Security Council would therefore rise from fifteen to twenty-four. Unfortunately, in terms of human dynamics, the total number of members would then be well beyond the limit at which effective decision making ceases to be possible.

Committees with twenty-four members never make real decisions, so the Security Council would become a merely ornamental body. True decision-making power in the world would simply move elsewhere, to some informal, smaller gathering where the major players could cut their deals as usual.

In the short run, before some new venue is agreed, crises could escalate out of control. Even in the long run, it will not enhance the predictability and transparency of world affairs, let alone "global democracy." So whose bright idea was this, anyway?

The idea of expanding the Security Council has been kicking around for decades, but it was U.S. President Bill Clinton who gave it wings. His problem was that the U.N. is hovering on the brink of bankruptcy because the United States owes it so

much in unpaid dues. Yet, though the U.N. is an important element in America's own security, he cannot get Congress to pay up promptly.

So why not get Japan and Germany, the world's second- and third-richest countries, to sit on the Security Council? Then "their" dues can be boosted to pay for the privilege. That was all Clinton really wanted. But in the real world of 1997 you cannot possibly sell an "expanded" Security Council of only seven permanent members, five of them Western and the other two east Asian.

So five permanent members quickly grow to ten (but we will not let the new ones have the veto, the U.S. stripping them of real power). And ten non-permanent members must grow to fourteen: cannot have the great powers outnumbering the others. The whole thing rapidly becomes as pointless as it is unstoppable.

The Security Council's current membership list is capricious. And unfair. Japan and Germany are bigger and richer than Britain and France, but they are not permanent members because they lost the World War II in 1945. China was founded in 1945, whereas India did not get its independence until 1947, so China is a permanent member and India is not.

The present system is grossly unfair — but the new one will be too. Moreover, it will create horrendous divisions as countries jostle for the new Security Council seats that are being created. And in the end, the Security Council will cease to be the place where the world's most important business is conducted.

Human Rights File

The King's words must be taken seriously

By Waleed M. Sadi

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein officially proposed the creation of a centre for democracy and human rights almost six years ago. Obviously the proposal was earnest since the idea was presented to Parliament.

The Monarch's proposal also called for the creation of an ad hoc Royal Committee to articulate the guidelines for this new body. Even though the committee completed its mandate many years ago and submitted its findings and a draft legislation on the subject to the government, nothing has been done yet, at the executive level, to give expression to the King's initial idea.

For the last few years, His Majesty's well-thought out proposal has been pushed around between the executive and legislative branches of government with no sign yet that the six-year-old idea was about to come to life.

I find this government's treatment an affront to the King; it is simply unfair to so crudely mishandle a submission by the King on a subject matter that has gained the Kingdom much acclaim worldwide.

I do not wish to go as far as to maintain that the treatment of the Monarch's proposal by successive governments has damaged their credibility. Yet, when the King speaks out so strongly and unequivocally on a national issue, the government is derelict in its duty if it fails to act on it faithfully and expeditiously.

The Royal Committee which formulated the draft legislation on the subject wanted the would-be centre to be effective in its mission to develop and consolidate democracy and human rights across the board. True to hardened traditions and paranoid tendencies towards fundamental changes, the government sought to make the centre a mere study group.

The divide between the executive branch and the Lower House of Parliament, which appears to have endorsed in toto the committee's draft text, remains where it has always been right ever since the idea was floated.

I do not think that when His Majesty King Hussein proposed the idea of establishing a centre for democracy he wanted it to be only a research institution. Had this been the intention, it would not have called for royal intervention. I believe the King is confident enough, as he has always been, that the country is strong and secure enough to coexist with pluralistic democracy.

This article of faith in a sophisticated level of democracy shows the degree of the King's personal confidence in the stability of the country and the sense of moderation that the majority of Jordanians believe in.

Could it be that by rejecting the establishment of an effective machinery to pro-

mote and protect responsible democracy the government is in effect voicing reservations about the King's judgement? If this is the case, then the past and present governments are misreading the King's intention, as well as the pulse of the country on the desired level of operation democracy.

It is not the first time that His Majesty King Hussein would suggest a certain course of action only to be rebuffed by the government. I often feel that if the country follows more faithfully the domestic and external policies of His Majesty, we would all be in better shape.

The King has an intuition about what is right and wrong for the country; take for example the King's warning about the bloated bureaucracy in our midst. We all know that no effective or meaningful measure would be taken now or ever.

We all remember the efforts of the late Prime Minister Wasel Tell, in the early sixties, to streamline bureaucracy, to no avail. It would be a pleasant surprise if the current government of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali succeeds where all others in the past failed.

It has not been long since the King personally exposed the orphanage scandal.

The King, of course, knows that there are other such problems awaiting revelations. The shocking revelations made personally by the King are obviously the tip of an iceberg that has yet to be fully exposed.

Recent commentaries on the subject, though, would want us to believe that what really bothered the King mostly, in dealing with the former Prime Minister Abdel Karim Kabariti, has nothing to do with the orphanage issue and its implications. Suddenly everybody thinks that they know better than the King himself what he was really disturbed about when he sounded the alarm.

Reinterpreting the King's views in almost the opposite sense has become the rule of thumb in our national ranks, especially at the executive branch level. No wonder the Monarch's strong words on the centre for democracy and human rights are now all but buried by the government simply because it believes it knows better what is good for the Kingdom.

The words of His Majesty King Hussein are precious and meaningful. No one should be arrogant enough to interpret them or twist their intentions. I believe it is unconstitutional to "disregard" the directives of the King in such a wanton way. The King needs to step in once in a while to reassert his directives since his remarkable intuition has been proven right time and again.

Zaire — African turning point?

By Gwynne Dyer

AFRICA IS nearing a turning point. As usual, all the signs point in different directions, but it looks like a turning point for the better.

"The tragedy in Zaire is an illustration of a new form of conflict which, following the cold war, threatens our whole continent," Togo's Foreign Minister Pierre Koffi Panou said last Tuesday as African leaders gathered in Togo's capital, Lome, for an emergency summit. It sounded wise and grave, but it was utter nonsense.

The tragedy in Zaire is not new. It is 32 years old, and it was caused by President Mobutu Sese Seko who seized power in 1965 and has comprehensively looted and ruined one of Africa's biggest countries. The rebels who aim to overthrow Mobutu, and the war by which they have gained control of a quarter of Zaire in the past five months, are not the problem; they are the solution.

It will not take the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) fifteen months, or even fifteen weeks, to win control of the remaining three-quarters of Zaire. Kisangani, the country's third-largest city, fell two weeks ago. Lubumbashi, the second-biggest city and copper-mining centre, and Mbuji-Mayi, the diamond-mining capital, may both fall this week.

And in Kinshasa, the chaotic capital where three million people eke out a living despite the total lack of government services, shanty-town dwellers and middle-class professionals are equally impatient for the triumphant entry of rebel leader Laurent Kabila. They will probably not have to wait much longer. The old Zaire is dead, and

a good thing too. But what will the new one be like? What impact will it have on the region? (Zaire is so immense that it has borders with nine other countries.) Above all, who is Laurent Kabila?

The leader of the Alliance is a stout, 56-year-old man who has been in the revolution business so long that he used to swap slogans with Che Guevara. He started out as a Marxist, founding the "Popular Revolutionary Party" on the shores of Lake Tanganyika in 1964. But Mobutu seized power in Zaire in 1965, and Kabila divided the next three decades between studying abroad (Tanzania, Europe, the U.S., and China), and fighting in the bush.

All that is over. "Now I'm on the same page as O.J. Simpson," Kabila lamented recently, gazing in horror at an international news-magazine, but he is clearly delighted to be coming out of the bush at last. And there is little doubt that he will keep going until Mobutu is history and the ADFL is in Kinshasa.

The summit in Togo was called by the Organisation of African Unity to organise a ceasefire in Zaire, but Kabila will certainly not stop his advance until he has captured Lubumbashi and Mbuji-Mayi. Then, with all the revenue-producing sectors of the Zairian economy in his hands, he will be ready to negotiate with Mobutu or his political heirs — but only about the terms of surrender.

Will he become president himself? "I am not the liberator," he said recently in a brave attempt at humility. "I participated in the rebellion, but I don't want to be president. I want my people to be free, and then I will return to my private life."

Translation: like his

friend Paul Kagame, who liberated neighbouring Rwanda from the genocidal grip of its previous regime two years ago, Kabila may not formally take the title of president, but he certainly plans to run the place for a while. Indeed, Kabila has already said that the transitional government must be made up mostly of Alliance members, plus "anti-Mobutists and anti-regime people who have never been in power and who never shared power."

Kabila has said that he is willing to meet with Mobutu or his representatives only once, outside the country, and the only topic will be when and how Mobutu goes. Otherwise, the ADFL troops will march on Kinshasa — and given the spectacular incompetence of the Zairian army (which was gutted long ago to stop it from becoming a rival to Mobutu's power), they will not be delayed for long.

There is no reason to fear a massacre, or even a major fight, when the alliance's forces march into Kinshasa. The French, Belgian and American troops standing by across the river in Brazzaville are mainly there to rescue foreigners if the Zairian army, which ran amok in the capital and killed hundreds in 1991 and 1993, goes on one last spree before the ADFL arrives. But even France has decided not to mount a last-ditch defence of its long-time protégé Mobutu.

The rebels may well invite Etienne Tshisekedi, who became prime minister in 1990-92 at the height of the pro-democracy agitation in Kinshasa, to resume his office. (Indeed, Tshisekedi has never accepted his dismissal by Mobutu: "He's been holding cabinet meetings every Thursday since 1992," said an aide.) But it is unlikely

that the ADFL will hold the scheduled national elections in July, or any time soon.

Which brings us to the question of what kind of regime Kabila will create in Zaire. It will certainly not be Marxist. Young Africans inhaled Marxism in the 60s like 60s Americans (except for Bill Clinton) inhaled marijuana, but Kabila outgrew all that long ago. In the eastern, gold-mining areas of Zaire that fell to the alliance in January, foreign companies are already being offered mining concessions.

Will an ADFL regime be honest and competent? If it is true to the model of the governments that back it in Rwanda, Uganda, and Ethiopia, then it will score very high on those measures. And if it simply stops the constant theft, then Zaire's immense economic potential could bring a transformation in the lives of its citizens in only a few years.

Mobutu, if he leaves Kinshasa in time, can expect to die in peace (he is suffering from cancer) in one of his dozen palaces scattered from Paris to Cape Town. But the ADFL is determined to recover the billions of dollars that he and his cronies pillaged from Zaire over the years: it has already requested Swiss assistance in reclaiming the estimated \$4 billion Mobutu has hidden away in Swiss banks.

But will the new Zaire be more democratic than the old? If you mean the rule of law, free speech, respect for human rights, then of course it will. But if you mean multi-party democracy as practised in Canada, Turkey or India, then do not hold your breath. Part of the analysis of the "second-generation" leaders of east-central Africa is that the multi-party system is

uniquely ill-fitted to that part of Africa's unusual circumstances.

Maybe the multi-party system works in southern Africa, where the Bantu expansion only arrived in the past couple of thousand years and the ethnic groups are big and few. Zimbabwe, for example, has only two major ethnic groups, and even South Africa has only eleven. But further north, where most countries contain many small ethnic groups but no majority group, many parties means many tribal parties, with each operating on the basis of blatant favouritism and patronage for its own ethnic group.

Zaire, where about 250 ethnic groups have their own languages, is a prime example. What Zaire can expect, for the foreseeable future, is Ugandan-style "non-party" democratic elections. That would be a vast improvement on what it has had for the past 32 years — or, indeed, the past century.

It would be no mean feat merely to rescue 35 million Zairians from the poverty, abuse and humiliation they have suffered for the past generation, but there is something bigger afoot. It is becoming possible to talk of a benign conspiracy among "second-generation" African regimes to rescue their neighbours from the depredations of "first-generation" post-independence regimes like Mobutu's.

They are doing it partly to protect their own borders, of course. When Uganda and Rwanda give the alliance forces in Zaire military aid — of course they do; how else does the ADFL manage to equip its fast-growing army with radios right down to squad level? — part of their motive is simply to destroy the guerrilla armies that

Mobutu allowed to operate against them. But they also have a higher mission: to rid Africa of monsters.

Not just Mobutu: the next victim of an ADFL victory will be Jonas Savimbi in neighbouring Angola. Savimbi is a sad case, a genuine rebel leader against the Portuguese colonialists whose UNITA movement was frozen out after independence in 1975 because the rival MPLA movement got Soviet and Cuban support. In desperation, he turned to the U.S., Mobutu, and even apartheid South Africa for support — and turned into a monster.

Fifteen years of war between the MPLA government and UNITA rebels reduced Angola to ruins before Savimbi accepted a UN-mediated ceasefire in 1990. When UNITA lost fair, internationally monitored elections in 1992, Savimbi rejected the result and returned to war. There was a second ceasefire in 1994, but last month the U.N. Security Council had to threaten sanctions against Savimbi unless UNITA joins the "unity government" as agreed.

Savimbi has depended on Mobutu for decades to channel foreign aid into Angola and sell UNITA's illicit diamond exports, so he did not hesitate to help in Mobutu's time of peril: he airlifted UNITA troops into eastern Zaire to help resist the Alliance's advance. But the war is virtually over now, and Mobutu is a goner. So is Savimbi, a little later, for he is now losing his connection to the outside world. Which means that Angola may finally find peace.

There is even hope that Africa's longest-running war, in Sudan, may now end. Mobutu's fall will cut off the military aid that flowed to Sudan's regime across the border between

Zaire and southern Sudan, but that is just part of a much bigger noose closing around the necks of Omar Hassan Al Bashir, the general who seized power in Sudan in 1989, and Dr. Hassan Al Turabi, the fundamentalist Islamic leader who shares power with him.

There has been a civil war between the Muslim, Arabised north of Sudan and its African, mostly Christian south for 30 of the 40 years since the country got its independence. It has killed an estimated 2 million Sudanese (overwhelmingly southerners). And since Bashir and Turabi made their unholy alliance to hold power by appealing to the most extreme and intolerant elements of Muslim opinion, the war has got far worse.

But there is something wrong with this picture, because visitors to Sudan have always remarked on the tolerant and broad-minded views of most Sudanese Muslims. Sudan's long agony is largely due to the efforts of various dictators to whip up some popular support by appealing to the small minority of Muslim extremists who find it reasonable to impose a strict Sharia regime on a country one-third of whose citizens are non-Muslims.

This strategy reached its apogee in the Bashir-Turabi alliance — but it has now begun to collapse from its sheer implausibility. Since January, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), led by John Garang and made up mostly of southern Christians, has driven the regime's forces from almost all of the two southern provinces. The regional capital, Juba, may fall even before Kinshasa.

The SPLA is not seeking to break away from Sudan. It is allied to ex-prime min-

ister Sadiq Al Mahdi's National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a moderate northern group that seeks democracy and religious freedom for all Sudanese. Ethiopia and Eritrea, both "second-generation" regimes themselves, are backing the alliance and giving the NDA bases for its increasingly effective attacks across the border into eastern Sudan. The days of the Khartoum government are also numbered.

But it is only when you pull back from specific countries that the true scale of these changes hits you. All of southern Africa — over 100 million people from Cape Town to Lusaka — is already at peace and mostly free from tyranny. Now, after wars lasting decades and genocides that killed millions, almost all of east-central Africa — another 200 million people from Sudan to Tanzania, from Zaire to Kenya — is nearing the same goals.

This is not an accident. It is the fruit of a deliberate conspiracy between the admirable "second-generation" regimes in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda and Rwanda, latterly with some discreet outside support from South Africa and the United States. True, parts of West Africa, including giant Nigeria, are still powder-kegs waiting to explode. But it is a huge change for the better — and it is being accomplished by Africans themselves.

For the ADFL in Zaire, there is only one dark cloud on the horizon. Its official seal, stamped on all government documents, features a lion's head — and the lion in question is all too obviously the "Lion King" from Disney's film of the same name. It is one thing to take on Mobutu's mercenaries, but have these people never heard of Disney's lawyer?

Poverty drives Bulgarians to Romanian potatoes

By Roxana Dascalu
Reuter

CALARASI, Romania — Ask poverty-stricken Bulgarians why they take the daily ferry trip across the River Danube to the Romanian port of Calarasi and the answer is likely to be potatoes.

The Bulgarians' rush for potatoes illustrates the economic crisis gripping their country. "I came here to buy two kg of potatoes," said Dimitar Iliev as he got off the ferry that brought him from Silistra in neighbouring Bulgaria — a mile across the Danube.

The burly Iliev is one of hundreds of Bulgarians easily spotted in Calarasi — milling around the town's open-air market or seated behind stalls in a bazaar.

Last year was bad for Bulgarian potatoes. The visitors pay the equivalent of 10 cents per kg in Calarasi, then pour them into sacks to take home and sell at three times the price. To stomp up the cash, they peddle an array of cheap goods — sunflower seeds, shampoo in dusty plastic bottles, cotton shirts, shoes, spoons and even the odd wedding dress, under the hostile gaze of Romanian police.

Some lose whatever pitance they earn in fines for selling without a licence.

Bulgarians see their Romanian neighbours, who earn an average of about \$70 per month, as living in relative prosperity.

"Everything is shut down in Silistra. The Socialists did it," said Mr. Iliev, 53, referring to the former ruling party toppled by 30 days of mass protests in January and February.

Mr. Iliev said he would back the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), the former opposition party which led the protests and was tipped by opinion polls to win up to 60 per cent of the vote on Saturday.

Some Romanians in

Calarasi have tried to cash in on the Bulgarians' misery. A local entrepreneur launched a "Golden ferry" line three months ago, charging a dollar for the wretched trip across the Danube.

"We're starving in Bulgaria," said Seher, a 49-year-old ethnic Turk and mother of four, as she sat in the cold drizzle. Beneath her on the wooden deck lay the prize of a hard day's labour — a sack of potatoes to sell back home in Silistra.

"Poverty, poverty. The factories are closed, nobody's in work," Seher moaned, gesturing with her creased hands to indicate an empty belly.

Rising over the opposite bank of the Danube were Silistra's endless rows of grim blocks of flats. Perched on the riverbank were the remains of a Soviet-made Ilyushin plane, an ill-fated attempt to open a bar, now closed for lack of customers.

Around 10 per cent of Bulgaria's 8.5 million population are ethnic Turks, most of whom live in the south and have painful memories of the discrimination they suffered under the Communists.

Former communist leader Todor Zhivkov conducted an assimilation campaign in the 1980s, forcing ethnic Turks to change their Islamic names for Slavic ones. At its height in 1989 more than 300,000 left for Turkey, but many have since returned.

The Bulgarian Socialist Party was formed by leading Communists who changed the party's name after Zhivkov was ousted in November 1989.

"The Communists robbed us, they stole from us. Now they're rich, and look what they brought us to," said Milka, 45, one of a clutch of a dozen ethnic Turk women aboard the Golden ferry, each seated atop a bulging sack.

Silistra's ethnic Turks are

also the descendants of the Ottomans who ruled the Balkans until the 19th century.

But many do not support the ethnic Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) which was competing in Saturday's elections. Some Turkish community leaders in northern Bulgaria have allied themselves with the centre-right UDF.

"I'll vote for the UDF," said Milka. "They'll get us passports without visas to travel throughout the world, and to get to Germany." Milka's family could not live on the 200 marks (\$120) that her eldest daughter sends back home from her wages as a maid in Germany.

Statistics tell the story of more misery ahead.

Unemployment, at 13.7 per cent in February, is expected to soar to 17.7 per cent by year's end. Inflation hit an annual 2,040.5 per cent in March.

"My clients are too poor to buy bread, let alone to get their photographs taken," said Nejdret Osman, 30, an ethnic Turk who abandoned his trade as a photographer and was carrying his potatoes home in a shabby camera bag.

"My daughter is five and my wife has no work. One has to make a living. I'll vote for UDF, for a change in Bulgaria."

Bulgarian women, driven by poverty get off the ferry which takes them across the Danube River with sacks of cheap potatoes bought in neighbouring Romania. The Bulgarians' rush for potatoes in Romania's southern port of Calarasi is an epitome of the economic crisis gripping their country — the main issue at stake for some 40 parties and candidates running in Bulgaria's general election (Reuter photo)



Policymakers face delicate task to keep world economy on track

WASHINGTON (R) — Rich and poor nations meet this week to discuss how to keep the world economy and global financial markets on an even keel by slowing growth in the United States and supporting growth in Japan and Europe.

Experts said the task is not an easy one and that policymakers at the semi-annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank will need to walk a fine line in order to pull it off.

"These are complicated issues," said Robert Hormats, vice-chairman of Wall Street broker Goldman Sachs (International). "I expect some optimism at the meeting, but it will be tempered optimism."

The highlight of the IMF/World Bank gathering will be a meeting next Sunday of economic policymakers from the powerful Group of Seven (G-7) industrial nations — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.

Much of their discussion is expected to be taken up by recent gyrations in the global currency market.

It was two years ago that the G-7 declared that the dollar had fallen too far and needed to increase. But now it is worried it may have climbed too far, especially against the yen, after a 50 per cent rise against the Japanese currency.

David Gilmore, of consultants Foreign Exchange Analytics, said he expects the G-7 to rely on jawboning, rather than on dollar sales in the foreign exchange market, to keep the U.S. currency from rising further.

That is the strategy the G-7 seemed to follow last week.

"I am concerned about the yen's recent movements, which have been very rapid," senior Japanese ministry of finance official Eisuke Sakakibara told Reuters last week.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin has said that he shares Japan's concern because of the risk that a weaker yen will lead to a ballooning of Japan's trade surplus by making its exports more competitive on world markets.

He has urged Japan to promote demand at home for its products, rather than depending on exports — a

message that President Bill Clinton is likely to echo at a summit with his Japanese counterpart on Friday ahead of the G-7 meeting.

U.S. officials are worried that the April 1 increase in Tokyo's consumption taxes will have the opposite effect of what they want, dampening demand in Japan and forcing automakers and other firms there to look abroad for sales.

"Of course, we're concerned about what the effects of the increase in consumption taxes there might be," U.S. Commerce Undersecretary Everett Ehrlich told Reuters last week.

Japanese officials acknowledge that the tax hike will slow economic growth, but they argue that the impact will only be temporary and limited.

"It is irrational to think that the Japanese economy is going to plunge," Mr. Sakakibara said. "At the moment, the upside rise for the Japanese economy is bigger than the downside."

Continued growth is also important for Europe, where many nations are striving to meet tough budget criteria for entry into monetary union at the start

of 1999.

U.S. Commerce's Ehrlich said that Europe's economic prospects look to have improved. "I think Europe is proceeding very nicely," he said. "We're hopeful we're seeing stronger growth out of Europe at the end of the year."

The big question mark remains whether monetary union will remain on track and if so, which countries will join together to form a single currency. Markets have been buffeted recently by press reports that Italy will not be in at the start.

In contrast to Japan and Europe, the problem in the United States is too much economic growth, not too little. The U.S. Federal Reserve (Fed) raised interest rates last month for the first time in two years in a move applauded by some in Europe.

The U.S. central bank wants to prevent the economy here from overheating and inflation from rising so as to extend the life of the six-year-old economic expansion.

"We're trying to foster growth, not stifle it," said one Fed official, who declined to be named.

Asia needs to innovate rather than import, says Asian Development Bank

MANILA (R) — Asia-Pacific economies must start to come up with their own ideas instead of relying on imported technology if they are to maintain the meteoric growth of the past few years, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said.

The region's economic growth slowed to 7.4 per cent in 1996 from 8.2 per cent the previous year and is expected to stabilise around this level for 1997 and 1998, it said in its Asian Development Outlook.

Most Asian economies had still outperformed other developing regions but with their main engine of growth — exports — sputtering, they had to seek more lasting measures, it said in the annual report.

The Manila-based multilateral institution, which released individual studies on more than 24 countries, predicted modest growth for this year and the next for larger economies and low growth or declines for smaller ones.

Last year's decline in the region was caused by a sharp drop in exports, the dollar's appreciation against the yen and the loss by some countries of their comparative advantage in labour-intensive product lines, the ADB said.

"In the early stages of industrialisation, it may be perfectly sensible to rely on imported technology rather than innovation. However, as economies catch up, then an indigenous capacity to innovate becomes more important," the report said.

However, not all of the members of the ADB panel of economists who prepared the report were Asia optimists.

Economist Paul Krugman of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has argued that the Asian miracle was nothing exceptional, but simply the predictable consequence of throwing large amounts of labour and capital at the production process.

"In some respects, the slowdown in 1996 should

not come as a surprise, as it was over-optimistic to expect that the extraordinary export growth of 1994 and 1995 could be sustained indefinitely," the ADB said.

The region's original economic "Tigers" — Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong — have achieved standards of living comparable with rich Western nations, vaulting from the region's backwaters to the affluent life in just four decades.

The figures dazzle, with productivity in Asia, where more than half the world's labour force is found, rising sharply.

But the majority of Asia's millions remain very poor.

"If poverty is defined as an income of less than \$1 per person per day, the number of people below the poverty line, was estimated in 1993 to be highest worldwide in South Asia at 43.1 per cent of the population," the ADB said.

Of a 1992 estimate that about 175 million children

under the age of five in developing countries were malnourished, over one half (92.4 million) lived in South Asia.

Plenty of money was still circulating in the region, however.

The countries of East Asia, South East Asia, and South Asia reinforced their position as the leading destination for foreign direct investment (FDI) among developing countries, the ADB said.

"These three subregions accounted for some \$65 billion of FDI inflows in 1995, up 21 per cent over 1994," it said.

Seeking to develop long-term relations with Asian corporations, international banks made more loans in Asia than in any other region.

"According to the Bank of International Settlements, the pace of new lending accelerated in the first half of 1996 to reach \$34.7 billion," it said.

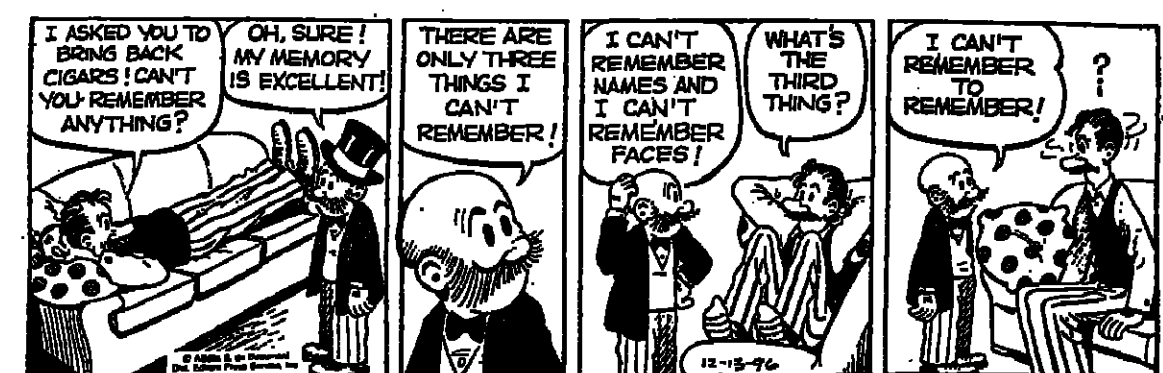
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CHF	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7104	0.6126	1.0813	1.2584	1.3694	1.6623	1.6623	2.0048
DE Mark	0.5847	1.0000	0.3578	0.5314	0.7396	0.8175	0.9891	1.1242	1.3708
GB Sterling	1.6323	2.7916	1.0000	2.3765	2.0550	2.2842	2.7624	3.1389	3.9127
CH Franc	0.8867	1.1737	0.4201	0.8637	1.0000	1.1116	1.3444	1.5275	1.8806
JP Yen	0.0079	1.3588	0.4863	1.0000	1.1568	1.2894	1.5111	1.7275	2.0048
CA Dollar	0.7146	1.2224	0.4375	1.0405	1.1111	1.2207	1.3742	1.5201	1.8201
IT Lira	0.0008	1.0101	0.3616	0.8860	1.3468	1.5284	1.7275	1.9275	2.2275
NL Guilder	0.5200	0.8822	0.3183	0.7573	0.8539	0.9275	1.0775	1.2275	1.4275
FR Franc	0.1734	0.2998	0.1062	0.2520	0.2180	0.2425	0.3334	0.3840	0.4540

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CHF	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7104	0.6126	1.0813	1.2584	1.3694	1.6623	1.6623	2.0048
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	2.3972	0.5324	1.5412	0.4273	0.9843	2.1754	2.4761	3.0626
GB Sterling	0.2888	0.4988	0.1005	0.9707	0.98	1.02	4.0821	4.5795	5.5795
Bahrain Dinar	2.45	4.1791	0.9488	2.6033	0.8831	1.91	4.2308	4.9298	6.0298
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.4646	0.1030	1.0303	0.8831	1.91	4.2308	4.9298	6.0298
Kuwait Dinar	3.3058	5.6405	1.2380	3.4622	1.203	2.63	5.9091	6.7291	8.2291
Emirates Dinar	0.2724	0.4624	0.1027	0.9917	0.8824	1.91	4.2308	4.9298	6.0298
Lebanese/1000	0.85	1.4597	0.3453	0.2448	0.2363	0.5164	2.3834	2.6834	3.2834
Egyptian	0.2354	0.2092	0.1078	0.1114	1.0753	0.0894	1.0843	1.2843	1.5843

Energy									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CHF	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
Brent	17.60	30.10	12.20	18.80	19.45	21.80	24.80	28.80	34.80
W. Texas	16.85	29.15	11.45	18.05	18.70	21.05	24.05	28.05	34.05
Bony	17.60	30.10	12.20	18.80	19.45	21.80	24.80	28.80	34.80
Dubai	16.50	28.80	11.30	17.90	18.55	20.90	23.90	27.90	33.90
UL Gas	188.00	328.00	128.00	194.00	200.00	224.00	254.00	294.00	354.00

Metal Prices									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CHF	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
Gold (oz's)	341.4	584.4	224.4	341.4	354.4	394.4	454.4	514.4	614.4
Silver (oz's)	4.74	8.04	3.14	4.74	4.94	5.54	6.34	7.14	8.54
Platinum (oz's)	375.7	634.7	254.7	375.7	394.7	434.7	494.7	554.7	654.7
AL (3 Months)	1554	2654	1054	1554	1614	1774	2014	2254	2654
CU (3 Months)	2285	3945	1545	2285	2385	2645	2985	3385	3985
Zinc (3 Months)	1245	2145	845	1245	1295	1415	1615	1815	2145
Lead (3 Months)	630	1080	430	630	650	710	810	910	1080
Ni (3 Months)	7330	12530	4930	7330	7630	8430	9630	10830	12830

Main Equity Indices									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CHF	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
New York	7073.58	12085.58	4485.58	7073.58	7311.58	8087.58	9258.58	10558.58	12558.58
New York	7073.58	12085.58	4485.58	7073.58	7311.58	8087.58	9258.58	10558.58	12558.58
London	3410.58	5840.58	2240.58	3410.58	3540.58	3940.58	4540.58	5140.58	6140.58
Tokyo	16382.14	27912.14	10813.14	16382.14	16813.14	18813.14	21813.14	24813.14	28813.14
Paris	2547.58	4347.58	1747.58	2547.58	2647.58	2947.58	3347.58	3747.58	4347.58
Frankfurt	3344.39	5744.39	2244.39	3344.39	3444.39	3844.39	4344.39	4944.39	5744.39

Energy									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CHF	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
Coffee (c/lbs)	208.25	354.25	134.25	208.25	214.25	234.25	264.25	294.25	344.25
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1483	2543	1043	1483	1543	1743	1943	2243	2643
Sugar (\$/ton)	310.2	534.2	204.2	310.2	324.2	354.2	394.2	434.2	504.2
Wheat (\$/ton)	164	284	114	164	169	184	204	224	264
Soya (c/lbs)	23.48	40.48	15.48	23.48	24.48	26.48	29.48	32.48	37.48
Tea (sp/kg)	142	242	92	142	147	162	182	202	232
Barley (\$/sh)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rice (\$/ton)	480	820	320	480	490	530	590	650	760

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

1 Inclined to indolence

5 Poisonous snake

10 West and Clarke

14 Fortuneteller's start

15 Inferno description

16 Spur on

17 Initial impact

20 Chinese ideal

21 Cries

22 In the — (at all)

23 Sesame plant

24 Greek letter

25 Adjutant, in a way

34 Lei man?

35 Actor Bruce

36 Fish eggs

37 Graduate school exams

38 Rite

39 1992 presidential candidate

41 Giant Mel

42 "Of — I Sing"

43 Got up

44 India, e.g.

48 Shipper Onassis

49 Legal matter

50 Redolence

53 More coherent

56 Corp. get-together

59 Junk delivery

62 Too

63 Bewails

64 "Rule Britannia" composer

65 Clarinet piece

66 Roaming dog

67 The yoke's on them

7 Actor Johnny

8 Goes wrong

9 Grain

10 Louvre, e.g.

11 Puccini opus

12 Freudian interests

13 Dispatched

18 Threads

19 Hit hard

23 Bridge fee

24 Two kips

25 Take a picture

26 Soil

27 Raccoon's cousin

28 State

29 "— say die"

30 Angler's basket

31 Item in a quiver

32 Loop

33 Discourage

39 Journals

40 Deity of desire

42 Precedes light and night

45 Muzzle cleaner

46 Mild oath

47 Stylish

50 From a distance

51 Part

52 Yorkshire river

53 Dundee man

54 Winglike

55 Zola classic

56 Karl or Harpo

57 Fork prong

58 Valley

60 Vessel letters

61 Big name in China

by Randall J. Hartman 04/09/97

Tuesday's Puzzle solved:

CAMP	SWISS	SLIP
ABET	AORTA	TARO
ROD	ANDREEL	IVAN
IDI	ODDS	ARCANE
BEASTLY	IRAK	
TEE	SNIFFLES	
LIMAS	NINETEETH	
ASOF	SORES	GOTO
OUTFITTER	RUNAT	
SPOONERS	RUR	
FREE	SALERNO	
POLLEN	AMIE	OIL
ALAI	BATONROUGE	
SERF	ORATE	ASEA
TAKE	KITES	KERN

© 1997 Tribune Media Services, Inc. All rights reserved. 04/09/97

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR MONDAY, APRIL 21, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll, Righter Foundation.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Steer clear today of a friend who gets under your skin and could cause you great difficulty if you are not cautious. You should not force any situations which could jeopardise your financial security in the days ahead.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) It is most important that you use tact and diplomacy in any public matters today, so make the best of any difficult situations. Don't allow a new friend change your methods of operation which have been successful previously.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Be sure to keep any promises you have made to others and thereby you can retain your good reputation. New projects can go quite well at this time if you plan them carefully in advance of when they are needed.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) A civic matter may not go as you had planned today, however, be patient and follow through and discover everything will be OK. Show your mate how loyal you are to him or her by doing some special activities which will be appreciated.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Any tasks you have started should be finished up today, so make the best effort of any difficult situations. Looking into new projects is fine, however, don't commit yourself to any thing final at this time.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Seek out some inexpensive pleasures during the daytime today, and schedule your week's career activities later this evening. Try to maintain harmony at home, so that there won't be any difficulties present.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) It is very important that you are polite to any new acquaintance today so that if any difficulties occur you can receive good advice. Do whatever your loved ones desire and make them very happy in the process.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You should not be in a hurry to answer letters or other communications that morning, as you may have to contend with a tense situation at home. Later this evening you can meet with close friends for recreational activities.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You can handle your career activities better today if you pay more attention to details which could be missed. Set up a new budget which will suit your needs better and allow you to have more funds in an emergency.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Private matters may take up most of your time today, however, don't let them keep you from handling an important business arrangement. Later this evening you can go out on the town to a romantic spot with your mate.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Keep that plan for gaining greater success confidential, since you won't everyone in on the secret of your prosperity. Do something which your mate enjoys, even though you have other preferences for fun recreational activities.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You have been hanging on to the past for too long, try to understand how modern methods of operation can benefit you. Be sure to drive carefully while on the highway and thereby avoid any difficulties which you encounter.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Poultry company posts lower sales but better net profit

**** DUE TO** marketing and sale problems, the Jordan Poultry Processing and Marketing Company recorded a 22 per cent drop in the volume of sales last year compared to the amount registered in 1995. According to the board chairman Salem Al Lawzi, the company continued to face unfair competition from small poultry shops spread throughout the Kingdom and was also unable to sell its products in outside markets. As such sales amounted to 5,194 tonnes for a total value of JD6.68 million. This amount did not include about 1,800 tonnes which were stored and sold during the first few weeks of this year.

The company's annual report indicated that the slaughterhouse operated at 47.5 per cent of its capacity last year as a total of 4.3 million birds were slaughtered over a period of 251 days. The report said the company has completed building cold storages at the site of slaughterhouse to replace storing the products at the warehouses of the Ministry of Supply. In addition to the new storage which has a capacity to store 1,800 tonnes, the company opened marketing offices in Amman, Zarqa, Jerash, Irbid and Karak.

The financial statement at the end of 1996 showed that despite lower sales last year, compared to JD8.2 million in 1995, the company was able to generate JD216,400 in net profit (JD117,300 in 1995). Total current assets rose from JD2.2 million at the end of 1995 to JD3.2 million whereas current liabilities increased from JD0.67 million to JD1.6 million.

Dr. Lawzi told the general assembly that at the request of the Ministry of Supply, the company stored 1,800 tonnes of frozen chicken to face expected shortage during the month of Ramadan on condition that the ministry would not resort to import frozen chicken from outside the country. He said the ministry moved at the end of 1996 and imported 2,000 tonnes of frozen chicken and, as such, negatively affected the selling price of the stored amounts at the beginning of this year.

The chairman blamed the ministry for the company's lost profit of JD180,000 as it lowered the prices of products from the Al Dhail slaughterhouse by JD0.100 per kilogramme (Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq + Al Dustour).

Government plans to fire retired persons who were rehired

**** RELIABLE GOVERNMENT** sources have said that there is an intention to activate the Social Security Corporation law that bans any person from working at any private or public sector institution, in which the government has an equity, after reaching the retirement age. The sources said the corporation has a list of names of persons who were rehired at the age of 60 and were rehired by contracts at higher salaries in addition to obtaining a retirement salary from the corporation.

The sources said that regulations from the Prime Ministry will be issued soon to terminate the contracts of some employees who hold senior positions at public shareholding companies. According to some estimates there are more than 800 cases in this regard (Al Dustour).

Europe's emerging markets competing with South East Asia for investments

SINGAPORE (AFP) — The emerging markets of Central and Eastern Europe are directly competing with South East Asia for investments as they vigorously pursue free trade and reforms, officials and analysts have said.

Investments are heading for these European nations because their economies are ripe for a boom compared to South East Asia, where gross domestic product (GDP) growth is slipping amid overheating problems, they said.

"There are certainly some examples of multinational corporations moving some of their manufacturing sites from South East Asia to central Europe," Nenad Pacek, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU's) director of research for Central and Eastern Europe, told AFP.

The EIU is a London-based global research, publishing and advisory firm helping multinational corporations to set up and expand operations.

Mr. Pacek, among speakers at a conference here on

investment potential in Central and Eastern Europe, said many Central European nations are racing to put in place political and economic reforms to join the European Union (EU).

Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovenia could probably join the EU in 2003 or 2004, he said.

"This will benefit them very strongly as their legislations will be similar to western Europe and, in terms of economic development, they will create a transparent environment for foreign direct investment and also for trade," Mr. Pacek said.

Central and Eastern Europe, with a total population of 250 million, consists of 26 countries, ranging from the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary and Poland to nations like Moldova and Albania.

Mr. Pacek said some of the multinational corporations which once used South East Asia as a low-cost manufacturing centre had moved their facilities to Hungary and Poland to

save on shipping costs.

"The new centres now act as manufacturing centres for the whole of Europe," Mr. Pacek said, adding, however, that the diversion of investments to Europe would not hamper growth in South East Asia.

Among Central Europe's other investment-drawing factors are its good infrastructure, skilled manpower and attempts to completely free trade, officials attending the conference said.

GDP growth in most of South East Asia has dropped amid slowing exports and inflationary and wage pressures. The region is also facing a lack of skilled manpower as it shifts to high-tech industries from assembly-type operations.

Franz Hoerhager, general manager of Bank Austria's international division, said since the iron curtain fell some seven years ago, total foreign capital to Central and Eastern Europe had grown to around \$38 billion.

He stressed the integration of the Central and

Eastern European economies with the EU was not a zero sum game.

"Successful integration will by all means bring about a very favourable investment climate, new markets both for the current EU members, as well as for our friends in the east," Mr. Hoerhager said.

With an overall GDP growth averaging about three to five per cent, the Central and Eastern European region has made considerable economic progress, Singapore trade development chief executive Barry Desker told the conference.

Mr. Desker said Singapore companies were being encouraged to expand to Central and Eastern Europe because it was strategically located between the large markets of the European Union and the former Soviet Union.

Singapore's two-way trade with Central and Eastern Europe posted a hefty increase of about 200 per cent in 1996 from 1990, he said.

Expert: Global fertiliser prices set to surge as India places big order

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Fertiliser prices in the global market may rise after India, one of the largest importers in the world, placed a major order, a leading agriculture expert has said.

India last month placed an order for 700,000 tonnes of diammonium phosphate, or DAP, paying a rate of \$235 to \$242 per tonne.

M.S. Swaminathan, the former president of the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, said: "As India and China are the two biggest importers of fertilisers, the prices are influenced dramatically by a sharp increase in demand from these two nations."

Mr. Swaminathan told AFP that long-term trade agreements should be made with reliable fertiliser exporting countries, as there would always be a crisis in meeting India's fertiliser needs.

"It is cheaper to import fertiliser than to import foodgrains," he said. Industry sources, mean-

while, said only 450,000 tonnes of diammonium phosphate were imported in the previous fiscal year ending March 30, 1997, the lowest annual figure on record.

"In 1995-96 fiscal, more than a million tonnes of DAP was imported," a source in the agriculture ministry said.

He said domestic fertiliser companies had failed to meet the production targets for DAP from the first half of the last fiscal year.

"The cooperative and public sector fertiliser units have achieved a production of 314,000 tonnes, against the target of 399,000 tonnes. In the private sector the target set was 833,000 tonnes, while the actual output was only 785,000 tonnes," the source added.

He said the shortfall was caused by state governments' failure to fix a DAP price and the failure of the national government to release a backlog of subsidies to the industry.

Official: Computer problem will cost Britain \$50 billion to fix

LONDON (AP) — Reprogramming computers in Britain to stop them fouling up on dates after year 2000 will cost an estimated 31 billion pounds (\$50 billion), says the head of the government body set up to tackle the problem.

The Financial Times said the figure by Robin Guenier, head of Taskforce 2000, is the first time the work has been officially priced. It said Mr. Guenier's figure is about three times higher than most of the "guessimates" by business consultants and computing services companies up to now.

The paper quoted Mr. Guenier as saying in an interview at which he produced the figure that his calculation is the first attempt to put a sensible figure on the cost of overhauling billions of lines of computer code in Britain.

The problem arises all over the world wherever older computers are in use because many only recognise years by their last two digits. They record 1997, for example, as 97.

This means that until they are reprogrammed, they register year 2000 as 1900, because the last two digits of both are 00, then count forward registering 2001 as 1901 and so on.

The Financial Times said the effects are already being seen in inaccurate sell-by dates on some foodstuffs in supermarkets and on financial documents.

It quoted Mr. Guenier as saying he based his figure on estimates of the proportion of Britain's four million companies likely to be affected and the known number of staff engaged exclusively on the problem.

It quoted him as saying British companies estimate they will need to assign a total of 300,000 staff to tackle the problem. That is roughly the same as the number of full-time computer professionals in the entire country.

interview at which he produced the figure that his calculation is the first attempt to put a sensible figure on the cost of overhauling billions of lines of computer code in Britain.

The problem arises all over the world wherever older computers are in use because many only recognise years by their last two digits. They record 1997, for example, as 97.

This means that until they are reprogrammed, they register year 2000 as 1900, because the last two digits of both are 00, then count forward registering 2001 as 1901 and so on.

The Financial Times said

Top Saudi shipping firm plunges deeper into losses

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The National Shipping Company of Saudi Arabia (NSCSA), the second biggest petrochemical transporter in the world, plunged deeper into losses in 1996, triggering job cuts and other austerity measures.

In a statement sent to AFP from its Riyadh headquarters, the NSCSA said it suffered losses of 77.6 million Saudi riyals (\$20.7 million) in 1996, one of the worst years in its history.

It was the third consecutive year that the company has faced a cash crunch, although it has been locked in major expansion plans involving increased services to South East Asia and the purchase of five supertankers.

"NSCSA's board met on Sunday and approved the company's closing accounts, which showed a net loss of 77.6 million riyals," the statement said.

The losses included 28 million riyals (\$7.46 million) from the operation of the new five oil supertankers because of lower lease rates, the company said, adding it expected rates to improve this year.

Another loss of 24 million riyals (\$6.4 million) was caused by an accident that damaged the engine and hull of NSCSA's Saudi Hafuf supertanker as it was sailing into the Gulf in March 1996.

The vessel, which took on water, was towed for repair at the drydocks in nearby Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The statement said Saudi Hafuf, one of NSCSA's biggest ships, was out of service for eight months.

"The company shouldered part of the repair costs while the other loss was caused by the non-operation of the

ship," an NSCSA official told AFP.

The statement did not give a breakdown for the remaining losses by the company, which operates more than 40 vessels transporting crude oil, petrochemicals, and general cargo to nearly 60 destinations.

NSCSA suffered from a loss of 11.5 million riyals (\$3.06 million) in 1995 and around 21.9 million riyals (\$5.84 million) in 1995.

The losses were in sharp contrast with the record profits of \$142 million achieved by NSCSA in 1991, when it monopolised services for the nearly 700,000 troops in a U.S.-led multinational force that ejected Iraqi invasion forces from neighbouring Kuwait.

NSCSA has taken delivery of five very large crude carriers from Japan over the past 15 months at a cost of around \$480 million. The vessels, with a capacity of 2.1 million barrels each, allowed the company to engage in crude transportation for the first time in 1996 as part of its expansion plans.

The Saudi government owns 29 per cent of NSCSA's capital of two billion riyals (\$533 million) while the rest is held by local investors.

Saudi Arabia is the world's dominant oil power, producing nearly 12 per cent of the global crude supplies and controlling more than a quarter of the oil reserves.

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

"Today I made a presentation, but I don't think my boss was impressed. He counted it toward my vacation time."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Anglian

Unscramble these four Jumbles. One letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

HYBUS
TAIMY
THOOS
LUPPIT

Print answer here:

Yesterday's Jumbles: AWASH PURGE GATHER COERCE
Answer: Often the result of a dead battery - A CHARGE CHARGE

JORDAN MARKETPLACE * JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE**

DAJANI JEWELLERS

World gems, hand made in Jordan in 18 & 21 k. gold. A truly unique shop.

STUDIO HAIG

Professional quality in 1 hour service. Develop your colour film at our shop and get: * JUMBO photo size 30% larger. * Free enlargement 20 x 30 cm.

Shmelsani - Opposite Grindlays Bank. Phone: 604042. Sweets Tel: 823891

FOR RENT:

DELUXE VILLAS & FLATS (FURNISHED & UNFURNISHED)

BYBLOS

SECURITY HOSPITALITY GASTRONOMY

New Low Season Rates. Fax 863451

HOTEL FAYOUM

86344

DELUXE VILLAS AND APARTMENTS - FURNISHED OR UNFURNISHED

JAMAL REAL ESTATE

Tel.: 699369

Big furnished or unfurnished villa for rent

Location: Behind New English School. 3 bedrooms, big reception, big garden, nice entrance.

Abdoun Real Estate Tel: 810605 - 810609 Fax: 810520

* We have many villas and semi villas furnished or unfurnished for rent.

FOR RENT:

DELUXE VILLAS (FURNISHED & UNFURNISHED)

BYBLOS

SECURITY HOSPITALITY GASTRONOMY

New Low Season Rates. Fax 863451

HOTEL FAYOUM

86344

DELUXE VILLAS AND APARTMENTS - FURNISHED OR UNFURNISHED

JAMAL REAL ESTATE

Tel.: 699369

Teppanyaki Sashimi Sushi

For Res. 813597 - 814118 Marwa St. Dumyat Center

CRYSTAL

Quality Serviced Suites

* One & Two Bedrooms * Fully Equipped Kitchens * Daily & Long Stay * Reasonable Rates

5th Circle Tel: 692672 Fax: 674551

FOR RENT

DELUXE VILLAS

APARTMENTS IN AMMAN

For details please call Tel: 864230 Fax: 864231

Milano

Pizzas - Pasta Exotic Sandwiches Hamburgers

Noted and Home Delivery Service

Bring the Ad. and Get 10% Discount on Food and Drinks

Shamsil Tel: 680670

RESTAURANT

Lunch Express Breakfast

Saturday through Thursday 12.30 - 3.00 JD. 3.500

Shamsil Tel: 079-57777

FOR YOUR Advertisement in Jordan Times

Call tel: 867171 ext. 223

TO ADVERTISE IN THIS SECTION CALL

667171 EXT. 223 OR 684311 - 699634 EXT. 42

Krajicek and Sugiyama win Japan Open titles

TOKYO (R) — Top seed Richard Krajicek overcame France's Lionel Roux — and frustration with his own serve — to capture the Japan Open title on Sunday.

The Dutch reigning Wimbledon champion needed three sets to take the \$154,000 first prize 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 while in the women's event local player Ai Sugiyama took \$27,000 and the title by beating American Amy Frazier 4-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Krajicek looked unstoppable as he roared away with the first set 6-2 but at the start of the second set his serve started to fail him and Roux broke for 2-1 — the first time Krajicek had dropped serve all tournament.

Roux went on to take the set 6-3 with a flurry of stinging returns and accurate passing shots.

The Dutch world number six moved up a gear in the decider, eventually clinching it 6-1 for victory.

"My serve is the engine of my game. When my serve was off it affected the rest of my game," Krajicek said. "But in the third set I just forgot about it because I knew I was playing well and it was just a shame to go to three sets," he added.

Fleet-footed Sugiyama said her stronger will to win gave her a three-set victory over third seed Frazier.

In the last set the Japanese favourite blew a 4-2 lead before breaking at 4-4 and sealing victory.

"I think mentally I had the will to fight very hard," she explained.

"Of course being supported so much by cries from the Japanese crowd really encouraged me."



A beaming Ai Sugiyama of Japan shows off her trophy after winning the women's singles title of the \$1.22 million Japan Open tennis tournament in Tokyo. Sugiyama beat Amy Frazier of the United States 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 (Reuters photo)

Celtic's Burns faces battle against the odds

GLASGOW (R) — Thirty years on from Celtic's greatest ever triumph, Tommy Burns must be feeling there has hardly been a worse time to be manager of the famous Scottish club.

As Celtic prepare to vie for the Scottish Cup next month, Burns will be haunted by the shadow of the 1967 European Cup victory under the legendary Jock Stein, as the Glasgow club now seem doomed to remain in the shadow of city rivals Rangers for a while longer.

Under manager Walter Smith, Rangers are poised to clinch a ninth successive league championship, which would bring them in line with the revered record Celtic notched up under Stein between 1966 and 1974.

Rangers need just one more point to win the championship. If Celtic lose to Aberdeen this weekend they will hand the title to their rivals on a plate.

Celtic, who gave up any dreams of becoming champions when they lost an old firm derby game last month, must hope they can beat First Division Falkirk on Wednesday to reach the Cup final.

Meanwhile, speculation is rife that further trailing behind Rangers could see 40-year-old Burns pay the ultimate price — losing his job.

Strained relations with Celtic's chief executive Fergus McCann have cast doubts over whether the club will renew Burns' contract when it expires this summer.

Former Newcastle manager Kevin Keegan, Barcelona boss Bobby Robson and even Johan Cruyff have been touted as possible replacements.

Ironically, Burns seems to have become a victim of his own success. Last season fans hailed him for taking Celtic to the runners-up spot behind Rangers losing only one game in the league — a statistic unmatched anywhere in Europe.

And this season Celtic supporters demonstrated sky-high expectations with 50,000 sell-outs at every game, putting the club within the top 10 crowd-pullers

in Europe.

Ten million pounds spent recruiting Paolo Di Canio from AC Milan. Alan Stubbs from English side Bolton and Sporting Lisbon's Jorge Cadete added weight to the conviction that this was to be Celtic's year.

But 10 months later, Burns admitted of Rangers: "It's like trying to stop a runaway train."

A childhood Celtic fan, Burns was signed by the late Stein and played for the club for 14 years. He cut his managerial teeth at Kilmarnock, returning to Celtic after a call from McCann in 1994.

But he found Celtic had changed. Years of mismanagement had taken the club to the verge of bankruptcy before McCann arrived and cleared debts of around five million pounds (\$8.1 million).

The astute Scots-Canadian raised 14 million pounds (\$22.7 million) through one of the most successful share flotations in British football, and generated more than 20 million pounds (\$32.5 million) to revamp Celtic's decaying stadium into a 50,000-seat arena.

Season ticket sales have swollen from 7,000 when Burns arrived to 40,000 today, and the club can now pay wages of 12,000 pounds (\$19,500) a week to lure stars like Di Canio and Roma's Enrico Annoni.

At the same time, pressure is mounting on Burns to produce results on the pitch. "I'll take the responsibility if I am to blame," said Burns, who pointed out that only eight league games lost out of 88 played in the last two years marked a level of consistency not seen for some time.

"Rangers had a six-title start before I even took this job, people forget that," Burns said. "If people are going to judge me...they have to do so over the last two seasons."

However, fans want trophies, not excuses. And so, it would seem, does Celtic chief McCann.

Inter ready for UEFA Cup final

MILAN (AFP) — Inter Milan captain Giuseppe Bergomi claimed Sunday his side will have no problem reaching the UEFA Cup final, despite Tuesday's semi-final trip to Monaco.

Bergomi, whose side beat Cagliari 2-1 on Saturday, said: "We're convinced that we'll be in the UEFA Cup final."

"All we need to do is play like we did for an hour against Cagliari, and avoid the slip-ups we made towards the end."

Inter have a 3-1 lead against the French side, but will be without suspended Chilean striker Ivan Zamorano, who scored in the first leg here and also broke the deadlock against Cagliari.

Alessandro Pistone is also suspended, and there are doubts over Dutch midfielder Aron Winter and Nicola Berti.

Bergomi said: "There aren't many of us — but we're all good and we'll try to avoid a repeat of our 1986 UEFA Cup semi-final against Real Madrid, when we won 3-1 at San Siro and then lost 5-1 in Spain."

Bergomi, who has spent his entire 17-year career with Inter, meanwhile revealed he has had offers from Scotland and Spain.

"The most concrete offer has come from Glasgow Rangers, but the only one that's tempted me has been from Valencia," said the 33-year-old.

IOC inspects Sydney Games budget

SYDNEY (R) — International Olympic Committee (IOC) officials will begin a close examination of the ever-expanding budget for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games on Monday, local organisers said on Sunday.

The 16 members of the IOC co-ordination commission arrived at the weekend for informal talks ahead of the official start of their inspection tour on Monday.

The commission will examine the budget of the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) and the New South Wales (NSW) state government's planned games spending.

Senior IOC official Thierry Sprunger was quoted in the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper last week as saying he thought it was important for Olympic games to break even and "not dig too much into the taxpayers' pockets."

Whether that will happen has become the focus of attention for politicians and media observers. SOCOG said 10 days ago they expected a budget surplus of up to A\$50 million (\$38.5 million) and had set up a A\$150 million "rainy day" fund.

At the same time, however, opposition politicians introduced proposed legislation aimed at forcing the government to make regular reports on the cost of the Games, including expenditure reviews and estimates of future costs.

SOCOG President Michael Knight said the A\$150 million contingency fund was set up for unexpected expenses. SOCOG would also make a payment of A\$200 million to the NSW government to help pay for the building of Olympic facilities, he said.

Lingering questions remain over the finances of the Olympic co-ordination authority, the NSW government body charged with building Olympic facilities.

The NSW government said in its 1996/97 budget that the cost of building games infrastructure had risen to A\$1.91 billion from an original budget of A\$1.54 billion, raising fears that the state's taxpayers would be left to fund the cost overrun.

SOCOG's budget has grown to A\$2.4 billion from A\$1.7 billion in their bid to the IOC. SOCOG have said A\$1.6 billion would come from television rights, A\$500 million from major sponsors and the rest from merchandising and ticket sales.

A major factor in Sydney winning the Olympic bid was an undertaking that the state government would underwrite the cost of the Games. The controversial Atlanta Olympics last year were not government-backed and Games organisers forced to cover a U.S. \$1.7 billion budget struggled to break even.

Foster fastest into world sprint final

GOTHENBURG, Sweden (R) — Former champion Mark Foster gained an edge over title-holder Francisco Sanchez and led qualifiers for the men's 50 metres freestyle final at the World Short-Course Swimming Championships on Sunday.

Britain's Foster — gold medalist in Palma de Mallorca in 1993 — led final qualifiers in 21.95 seconds, just ahead of the Venezuelan 1995 winner who clocked 22.01.

Sanchez is aiming for a golden double after winning Saturday's 100 freestyle.

American Misty Hyman, three times a bronze medalist in this third edition of the championships, sounded one more challenge for gold in the women's 200 metres backstroke.

Hyman, who won the 100 backstroke title in 1995, led final qualifiers



China's (From L-R) Le Jingyi, Nian Yin, Shan Ying and Chao Na celebrate their world record in the women's 4x100 metres freestyle relay short-course in Gothenburg April 19. China set the record in a time of three minutes 34.55 seconds at the world short-course swimming championships (Reuters photo)

for the 200 event in 2:09.13 ahead of fellow American Lia Oberstar (2:09.40).

Germany's Sabine Herbst (2:09.72) and China's Chen Yan (2:09.87).

Hyman, who set a world 50 metres butterfly short-course mark during Saturday's 100 butterfly final, has taken bronzes in the Scandinavian Arena pool in the 100 backstroke and 100 and 200 butterfly.

Australia's Matthew Dunn stayed on course for a repeat of the title double he achieved in 1995 in Rio de Janeiro when he led qualifiers in the 200 metres individual medley.

Dunn, victor in Thursday's 400 individual medley, clocked one

minute 59.25 seconds in heats for the 200 event on the final day of the four-day championships.

Fellow Australian Zane King was second overall in 1:59.41 and American Ron Karnaugh, joint bronze medalist in the 400, third on aggregate in 1:59.65.

Cuba's Neisser Bent, the new 200 metres backstroke champion, set a championship record in the men's 100 backstroke heats.

Olympic bronze medalist bent clocked 52.94 to lead the way to the final from American Brian Retterer (53.05) and Australian Adrian Radley (53.06).

Fellow Cuban Rodolfo

Falcon, the Olympic silver medalist and defending short-course champion, was fourth-fastest overall in 53.22.

Falcon won both backstroke events in Rio but failed to qualify for the 200 final in Gothenburg.

Louise Karlsson raised Swedish hopes of gold with the quickest heat time of 2:11.42 in the women's 200 individual medley ahead of Slovakia's Martina Moravcova (2:12.62) and Denmark's Britta Vestergaard (2:13.16).



Claudia Poll of Costa Rica competes to set a new world record time in the women's 400 metres freestyle short-course in Gothenburg. Poll set the record when she clocked a time of four minutes 0.03 seconds at the world short-course championships (Reuters photo)

TODAY AT

CINEMA

TEL:634144

PHILADELPHIA "1"

Michael Douglas
& Val Kilmer ... in

THE GHOST AND
THE DARKNESS

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA

TEL:634144

PHILADELPHIA "2"

Demi Moore..... in

STRIPTease

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA

TEL:699238

PLAZA

Eddie Murphyin

METRO

Shows: 3:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30
THE HUNCHBACK OF
NOTREDAME
Show: 5:00 p.m.

CINEMA

TEL:677420

CONCORD

CONCORD "182"

Steven Segal...in

GLIMMER MAN

Sylvester Stallone ...in COBRA

Michael Jordan...in SPACEJAM

Concord 1: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30
Concord 2: 12:00, 1:30, 3:00, 4:30, 6:00

Nabil & Hisham's Theatre

TEL: 625155

The political satire

AMN YA HO

For reservations call 625155



New York Knicks' Charlie Ward leaps into Chicago Bulls Jason Caffey as he heads for the basket during first quarter action at the United Centre. New York defeated Chicago 103-101 (Reuters photo)

Knicks clinch third place and kill Bull's bid for 70 wins

CHICAGO (R) — John Starks scored eight of his 20 points in the final six minutes as the New York Knicks clinched third place in the Eastern Conference with a 103-101 victory over the Chicago Bulls on Saturday.

The Bulls finished at 69-13, just missing their second straight 70-win season.

Starks made a three-point shot with 5:32 left to give the Knicks (57-25) their first lead since the first quarter at 90-89. He made another three-point shot with 40 seconds to go, boosting the lead to 103-99.

Chicago's Scottie Pippen made two free throws but missed badly on a three-point shot at the buzzer.

"I love taking a shot at the end of the game, like the one tonight, especially against a team the calibre of the Chicago Bulls," Starks said.

Michael Jordan scored 33 points for the Bulls.

In Atlanta, Steve Smith scored 21 points as the Atlanta Hawks assured themselves of homecourt advantage in the first round of the playoffs with a 136-104 rout of the Philadelphia 76ers.

Mookie Blaylock scored 17 points and Eldridge Recasner added 15 for the Hawks (56-25), who were locked into fourth place in the Eastern Conference when the Knicks clinched the third seed by beating the Bulls.

"We have to concentrate on the playoffs," Smith said. "We have a good chance of beating anybody. The ultimate goal is to win a championship, not to get to the Eastern Conference finals."

Allen Iverson scored 35 points for the 76ers, who ended their season by losing 11 of 12 games.

In Dallas, Tom Hammond scored 24 points and Ervin Johnson added a season-high 21 and a career-best 26 rebounds as the Denver Nuggets snapped a 10-game skid with a season-ending 100-95 victory over the Dallas Mavericks.

Antonio McDyess chipped in 20 points and 11 boards for Denver.

Shawn Bradley had 25 points for Dallas.

In Orlando, Dan Majerle scored 18 points and John Croty had 17 as the Miami Heat posted a 102-88 victory over the Orlando Magic in a half-hearted preview of a first-round playoff matchup.

Isaac Austin chipped in 12 points and nine boards for Miami, which finished with a 61-21 record and the Eastern Conference's second seed for the upcoming playoffs.

The team played without centre Alonzo Mourning and guard Tim Hardaway, who had reached a \$1.2 million bonus for a 3-to-1 assist to turnover ratio and likely didn't want to ruin it.

"I took a day off, my back was hurting me a little bit," said Hardaway.

In Seattle, Detlef Schrempf scored 12 of his 24 points in the first quarter, when the Seattle SuperSonics raced to a 20-point lead on their way to a 125-100 rout of the Los Angeles Clippers.

Gary Payton had 25 points to lead the Sonics, who completed their season at 57-25.

Lamond Murray scored 19 points and Loy Vaught added 16 for the Clippers, who were blown out for the second straight night. They lost to the Lakers on Friday, 123-95.

In Utah, Karl Malone scored 26 points in three quarters as the Utah Jazz beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 101-89.

John Stockton and Antoine Carr added 14 points apiece for the Jazz, who led by 18 points after one quarter and substituted freely thereafter.

In Phoenix, Bryant Reeves scored a career-high 39 points and Shaheef Abdul-Rahim recorded his first triple-double as the Vancouver Grizzlies used the best shooting night in franchise history to put a crimp in the Phoenix Suns' playoff plans with a 121-107 victory.

Reeves added 11 rebounds and Abdul-Rahim had 26 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for Vancouver, which hit 59.5 per cent of its shots from the field (50-of-84).

John Johnson, who has said he'll retire at the end of the season, had 36 points, giving him at least 30 in six of the Suns' last 17 games.

Phoenix, which lost the tie-breaker to Minnesota and will be the seventh seed in the Western Conference playoffs.

At Golden State, Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf scored 26 of his 28 points in the fourth quarter and overtime, nearly setting an NBA record with 11 points in the extra session, as the Sacramento Kings defeated the Golden State Warriors, 122-120.

Abdul-Rauf had just one field goal entering the fourth quarter but he hit 6-of-10 field goals in the period. He was even hotter in overtime, making all four of his shots, including three three-pointers. He fell just three points short of Butch Carter's NBA record of 14 points in an overtime, set on March 20th, 1984 while with Indiana.

Beirut wants first Formula One Grand Prix in Middle East

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese businessman Khaled Altaki has hit fourth gear in his efforts to stage the first Formula One Grand Prix in the Middle East in his hometown of Beirut.

Sitting in his office full of pictures of racing cars and miniature Formula One models, Altaki said the idea struck him in 1994 while he was watching the F1 Grand Prix race in Monaco from his residence in London.

"I was watching Monaco and suddenly Beirut appeared before my eyes. The sight of the beautiful seaside track travelling through inner parts of the city with palm trees along the way could be in either places," he said.

He said Formula One officials have expressed interest in the circuit, but they are waiting for him to complete the necessary documents and to stage a Formula 3 race in November, which is needed to qualify before granting a license.

It all goes as planned, the first official Formula One Grand Prix race in Beirut should be held in 1998, he said.

The \$50 million project is to be funded through sponsorships and contributions and should attract some 250,000 visitors, helping boost Lebanon's reconstruction efforts after 15 years of civil war.

Altaki said he's counting on revenues of \$600 million, not to mention an international recognition through millions of viewers from around the world.

The proposed circuit begins on the Boulevard Rafik Al-Hariri separated from the pale blue waters of the Mediterranean by a mere stretch of white sand, snakes up into the city and ends along the famous seaside Charles de Gaulle Avenue.

The 6.7 kilometre-long "Al-Hariri Beirut Circuit," set to be longest in the world, was named after Lebanon's billionaire Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, who gave his full backing for the project to Altaki in writing.

Altaki said he is now "racing against time" and has already recruited the UK's international circuit consultants to help him face requirements of the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), the sport's governing body.

The businessman, who returned to Lebanon in November after 10 years abroad, has so far spent \$402,000.

Altaki said a Formula 3 — the cars are the same as in Formula One, but with revolutions per minute (rpm) of 10,000 instead of 17,000 — will be held on November 2 and another in June 1998.

"The big event of the Formula One is set for November 1998 and for every year after that," he said.

A go-kart race is scheduled for June to exhibit the start-finish line, with an exhibition of classic new and racing cars and free concerts on both sides of the picturesque beach.

Altaki said FIA expressed eagerness to hold a Grand Prix in Beirut because of Lebanon's reputation as a favourite tourism resort.

"Even 15 years of civil war (1975-1990) could not harm it," said the businessman, who even raises a warning finger against "any attempts" by the Israelis to strike Lebanon or his pride and joy, the Grand Prix.

Altaki's second most-desired dream remains: to find and train a young Lebanese driver wearing the colours of the national flag on his visor and racing on the Formula One tracks around the world.

"Lebanese drivers are excellent. They have great talents acquired by driving during long years of war and chaos with no traffic signs or laws," he said, reminiscing the "wild days" when he raced his friends on Beirut streets.

Hundreds of cars, driven by nervous young men, zigzag Beirut's streets with stickers of three-times world champion Ayrton Senna, the legendary Brazilian driver who died in a fatal crash in 1994.

"I cannot wait to have autographs from all these world champions in Beirut," said 24-year-old Karim, who has been collecting for 10 years Formula One memorabilia sent by his brother in Monaco.

Yankees edge White Sox; Royals beat Angels

CHICAGO (R) — Tino Martinez hit a three-run homer and Mariano Rivera retired the final five batters as the New York Yankees won consecutive games for the first time this season, defeating the Chicago White Sox 3-2 on Saturday.

Martinez's towering homer to right-centre field off reliever Tony Castillo (1-2) erased a 2-0 deficit. It was Martinez's seventh homer, one behind league leader Ken Griffey Jr. of Seattle.

"Castillo threw me a fast ball and left it right over the middle," Martinez said. "I just wanted to hit it hard and keep the rally going, and I hit it perfect. It was nice to get one that we shouldn't have won."

"No question that was the biggest win of the year," Yankees manager Joe Torre said.

Kenny Rogers overcame a shaky start for New York, which committed four errors in the first four innings. Rogers allowed two unearned runs in 7-1/3 innings.

In Cleveland, David Justice homered and drove in three runs and Manny Ramirez, Brian Giles and

Jim Thome added two RBI apiece as the Cleveland Indians pounded their way to an 11-6 victory over the Milwaukee Brewers.

Thome had three hits and Giles also homered for the Indians, who collected 17 hits off four pitchers.

"We showed what we are capable of doing when we are hitting," justice said. "We haven't been playing as well as we will be playing."

In Detroit, Willie Adams allowed three hits over 7-2/3 innings, and Mark McGwire and Geronimo Berroa homered to power the Oakland Athletics to a 7-1 victory over the Detroit Tigers.

All of the hits Adams allowed were by Damon Easley, and he struck out nine with three walks, lowering his era to 7.32.

"His fastball had a little hop today and he got the breaking pitches over," Oakland manager art Howe said.

In Kansas City, Kevin Appier pitched a five-hitter and Mike MacFarlane ended an 0-for-17 slump with a three-run homer as the Kansas City Royals dealt the Anaheim Angels



Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Hideo Nomo winds up on the first pitch to the Houston Astros Craig Biggio (R) in the first inning of their game in Los Angeles. Houston defeated Los Angeles 2-1 (Reuters photo)

their third straight loss 7-3.

Staked to an early lead, Appier (2-0) walked one and struck out four.

"I knew there was a long way to go, I wasn't panicking," said MacFarlane. "I'd been working hard, it's coming around, it's getting close."

At Texas, Roger Clemens allowed two hits in seven shutout innings, as the Toronto Blue Jays blanked the Rangers for their fourth straight victory 6-0.

Clemens (3-0) walked four and struck out four.

The Blue Jays staked Clemens to a four-run lead in the first inning when Orlando Merced and Joe Carter had back-to-back singles and scored on a double by Ed Sprague. Carlos Delgado followed with his second home run of the season.

In Seattle, Bob Tewksbury tossed a six-hitter for his first shutout since 1995 and Terry Steinbach had

two RBI as the Minnesota Twins defeated the Seattle Mariners 4-0.

Tewksbury allowed just five singles and a bloop double, walking one and striking out five.

Mariners starter Dennis Martinez allowed three runs and seven hits in 6-2/3 innings.

The game between the Baltimore Orioles and the Boston Red Sox in Boston was postponed due to rain.

Cubs tie record for worst start in Major League history

NEW YORK (R) — Lance Johnson's sacrifice fly in the seventh inning snapped a tie and Alex Ochoa had a two-run single in the eighth as the New York Mets posted a 6-3 victory over the Chicago Cubs, who matched the second-worst start in Major-League history on Saturday.

The Cubs, who established the all-time National League mark with Wednesday's 4-0 loss to Colorado, fell to 0-13 to tie the futility of the 1904 Washington Senators and 1920 Detroit tigers. The Major-League record of 0-21 was set by the Baltimore Orioles in 1988.

"Today we played a good ballgame but just got beat," said Cubs manager Jim Riggleman. "It's hollow to say, don't think about the streak. But I think we are losing each individual game because we are just not getting it done. I don't want to get caught up in the streak."

At Colorado, Ryan

Klesko homered and drove in four runs as the Atlanta Braves held on for their seventh straight win 8-7 over the Colorado Rockies.

Closer Mark Wohlers started the bottom of the ninth with an 8-4 lead, but walked Dante Bichette and surrendered Vinny Castilla's seventh homer. John Vander Wal then singled and Walt Weiss walked to chase Wohlers.

Alan Embree entered and Jeff Reed sacrificed before Mike Bielecki came on. Eric Young followed with a sacrifice fly to cut it to 8-7, but Quinton McCracken lined out to shortstop to end the rally and the game.

In Los Angeles, Darryl Kile outduelled Hideo Nomo and Bill Spiers scored one and drove in the other as the Houston Astros held on for a 2-1 victory over the Dodgers.

Kile (1-1) gave up one run and seven hits over eight innings with four walks and three strikeouts.

In Philadelphia, Kevin Stocker's steal of home and

Darren Daulton's two-run double highlighted a three-run sixth inning as the Philadelphia Phillies rallied to defeat the Montreal Expos, 10-8.

Gregg Jefferies hit a three-run double and Scott Rolen added a two-run double for the Phillies, who have won consecutive games for the first time this season.

In Pittsburgh, Kevin Elster's sacrifice fly in the ninth inning scored Jermaine Allenworth with the winning run as the Pittsburgh Pirates edged the Cincinnati Reds 6-5.

Ricardo Rincon (1-1) struck out five in two scoreless innings and picked up his first major-league win.

Kevin Young drove in three runs, two with a homer in the third inning.

In Honolulu, four pitchers combined on a six-hitter and Brian Jordan scored the

game's only run on a throwing error as the St. Louis Cardinals edged the San Diego Padres 1-0 in the first game of a doubleheader as baseball made its regular-season debut in Hawaii.

This was the first of a three-game series at Honolulu's Aloha Stadium, which is normally a football venue.

In the second game, St. Louis made two runs in the second inning hold up to beat the Padres 2-1.

In San Francisco, Glenallen Hill drove in two runs when right fielder

Gary Sheffield lost his flyball in the sun with two out in the bottom of the eighth inning as the San Francisco Giants rallied for their eighth straight win, 3-2 over the Florida Marlins.

Rookie Tony Saunders (0-1) limited the Giants to three hits over seven innings and took a 2-1 lead into the eighth.

"I didn't see it," Sheffield said. "The sun came out at the last minute. I lost the ball and that was it. I always have problems when I come here. The sun never helps, no matter what ballpark you're in."

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNIAH HIRSH

THE TRICK THAT VANISHED

Neither vulnerable. North deals.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ 10 6 5 2</p> <p>♥ A 8 5</p> <p>♦ A Q 10 6</p> <p>♣ A 9</p>	<p>EAST</p> <p>♠ Q 8 7 3</p> <p>♥ J 6</p> <p>♦ K J 5</p> <p>♣ Q 10 8 2</p>
---	---

WEST

♠ 9 4

♥ Q 10 9

♦ 8 5 3

♣ A 7 6 4

SOUTH

♠ A J 6

♥ K 9 7 4 2

♦ 9 7 4

♣ 8 3

The bidding: North 1♣, South 1♥, West 1NT, East 2♣, South 2♥, West 3♥, East 3NT, South 4♥.

Opening lead: Nine of ♠.

Looking at all four hands, it might seem that South, declaring four hearts after a spade lead, must lose one trump, two diamonds and a club. But South, Tim Tullis of Chicago, managed to make one loser disappear.

North-South were using a mini-no-trump opening bid (10-12 points).

at this vulnerability, so the range for North's one-no-trump rebid was 13-18. South's two-spades was a gadget, to show invitational values and five hearts, and North, with a maximum, was delighted to accept.

The spade opening lead solved South's problem in that suit, but there was still a lot of work to do. Declarer drew two rounds of trumps with the ace and king, then led a club toward the king. West shot up with the ace, cashed the queen of trumps, on which East discarded a club, and exited with a diamond.

The table's ten of diamonds lost to the jack, and East put declarer in dummy with a club. Reading the hand perfectly, declarer played off the ace of diamonds, then came to hand with the ace of spades to cash the last two trumps, discarding the queen and six of diamonds from the board. This reduced declarer to the six of spades and nine of diamonds. If East discarded a spade, dummy's spades would take the last two tricks; if East pitched the king of diamonds, declarer's nine would be promoted to winning rank.

FOR RENT

Fully furnished apartment of an area of 165 sq.m. Consists of 2 bedrooms, 2 salons, 2 bathrooms, tele-phone, central heating and all facilities separate. Ground floor, own entrance, garage and garden, within a 2 Apt. building only.

Excellent location in Jabal Amman, Near Khalidi Hospital.

Tel.: 642006

FOR SALE AT DER GHBAR, EXCELLENT LOCATION:

1. Apartment building: 1440 sq.m (JD460,000). Located at a 16 m St.
 - 4 apartments: 4 floors-one apartment, each floor
 - 4 bedrooms: 2 masters-2 bedrooms-reading room-kitchen-vestibule-living-family-dining (L-shaped).
 - Interior decoration-marble flooring-Italian ceramic-French toilet fixtures-German mixers-heating system-chandeliers-TV system-car garages in basement-wisepare storage for each apartment.
2. Duplex: American Design-2 Duplex (543 sq.m each - JD210,000). Located at 16 m St.
 - Basement: Boiler-maid-recreation hall
 - Ground floor: Living-family-dining (L-shaped)-kitchen-bathroom
 - First floor: Master bedroom-2 bedrooms-family room
 - Roof: Bedroom-washroom-living-terrace
3. Villa-Undineh: 912 sq. m (JD250,000). Located on curve, 16 m wide
 - Basement: Boiler-storage-maid W/kitchen & bathroom-recreation
 - Ground floor: Office-living-family-dining-bedroom-kitchen-2 bathrooms
 - First floor: 3 masters-2 bedrooms-kitchenette-terrace
 - Roof: Bedroom-washroom-Jacuzzi Terraces

Interested only, please contact the owner at Tel.: 862033-Mobile-079-23273

A FURNISHED HOUSE FOR RENT

A fully furnished house, consisting of 2 big bedrooms + a small one, large living area, dining area, two bathrooms, 2 balconies with electrical appliances and telephone, located on the 4th Circle, Jabal Amman.

Call daily from 1:00 p.m. on Tel.: 644963

Cyprus revolt against British army presence

NICOSIA (AFP) — The normally sleepy village of Trachoni in Cyprus, which is surrounded by a British military base, has risen up in revolt against 37 years of control by the former colonial power.

"Enough is enough. The British are in our country yet they impose their laws, their police force and their courts on us," said Pericles Mathiou, the village's mukhtar or elected chief.

Trachoni is partially administered by Episkopi, one of two British bases on Cyprus which enjoy sovereign status due to a provision under the 1960 treaty giving the island independence from Britain.

Simmering resentment in the village boiled over last Monday when villagers fought unprecedented clashes with police from the British Sovereign Bases Area (SBA) and stormed the police station to set free two Greek-Cypriots held there.

The last straw for the villagers had been the arrest by the British earlier in the day of 39-year-old Greek Cypriot, Angelos Panaretou.

Mr. Panaretou, a father of five, was accused of illegally building a leisure complex on British base land and head-butting an SBA police officer during a fracas about the construction, breaking his nose.

He was taken to the Episkopi police station along with two of his brothers and the village's deputy mukhtar.

The news spread like wildfire around the village along with rumours — denied by the British — that the Panaretou brothers had been beaten up by police.

An angry crowd, including members of the Cyprus anti-bases lobby, converged on the SBA police station and after scuffles with the police broke inside and freed two of the four detained men.

The pair are still at large. "I suffered an angina attack watching my children being beaten up by soldiers and not being able to do anything about it," said the mother of the two brothers at her Trachoni home.

One of her sons, Cleovoulos, said: "The soldiers must go. They harass our women, terrorise our children and beat up our young."

The British army responded to Monday's clashes by stepping up security at Episkopi, closing the main coastal road that runs through the base.

Trachoni's mukhtar said: "Between 2,000 and 3,000 soldiers have been deployed round here and we have been cut off from the rest of the island since Monday."

Episkopi and the sovereign base of Dhekelia, also on the southern coast, cover 160 square kilometres, three per cent of the total area of Cyprus. A total of 4,200 men are based there. Their presence is causing

increasing resentment among Cypriots. A poll last February showed that 69 per cent of Greek-Cypriots wanted the British presence to leave.

Moreover, a previously lack-lustre campaign against the British bases has received a shot in the arm with the backing of a Marios Matsakis, Cyprus's high-profile and highly outspoken pathologist-turned-MP.

Mr. Matsakis, dressed in combat gear, led demonstrations against British military exercises in February in the Akamas Peninsula, one of Cyprus's last undeveloped areas.

He likens the British presence on the island to an occupation. "We have two occupation forces, the Turks in the north (which they have occupied since 1974) and the British in the south," he said.

"I demand the government immediately set up a joint committee to review the accords" granting the British bases, he added.

Fearing possible damage to Cyprus' relations with Britain at a time it is trying to join the European Union, President Glafcos Clerides condemned last week's events.

"Our president is old and he gets frightened every time it comes to the British," said Mr. Matsakis. "Our activities have been peaceful so far, but who knows? Violence leads to more violence," he warned.

Turkey's military rift with Erbakan widens

ANKARA (AP) — In a rare public outburst by the military, a senior army official compared the governing Islamic party to Muslim guerrillas in Algeria, reports said Saturday.

The comments raise the tension between the army and the Welfare Party, which leads the coalition government.

The Milliyet newspaper quoted a gendarmier commander, Brigadier General Osman Ozbek, as saying Welfare is seeking to strengthen its power "sometimes by violence, like in Algeria."

"If I have fought (rebel Kurds) for 13 years, I can fight them too," Gen. Ozbek was quoted as saying.

The rift has widened between Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare Party and the military, which proclaims itself the guarantor of Turkey's secular traditions.

The national security council, which includes the president and top army generals, is scheduled to meet later this month to assess measures taken so far by Mr. Erbakan and his supporters.

Gen. Ozbek reproached Mr. Erbakan for going to Mecca as guest of the royal family of Saudi Arabia, a country he criticised as being ruled by Shariah, or strict Muslim religious laws. "No man would go and be a guest of that king," Gen. Ozbek was quoted as saying.

Mr. Erbakan's pilgrimage, his 25th to Saudi Arabia, has also been criticised by some religious circles and opposition members who claim the religious ritual had been turned into a political show.

Egyptians, Lebanese back home from Zaire

BEIRUT (AP) — A plane carrying 100 Lebanese fleeing fighting in Zaire arrived in Beirut on Sunday.

The Lebanese were living in Zaire's diamond-mining capital, Mbuji-Mayi, which fell to rebels April 4.

The group, most of them women and children, arrived aboard a plane from Brazzaville, Congo, immigration officials said.

About 1,000 Lebanese are living in Zaire, and the government is trying to get information on their conditions, said Haitham Jouma'a, director-general of the Immigration Affairs Ministry.

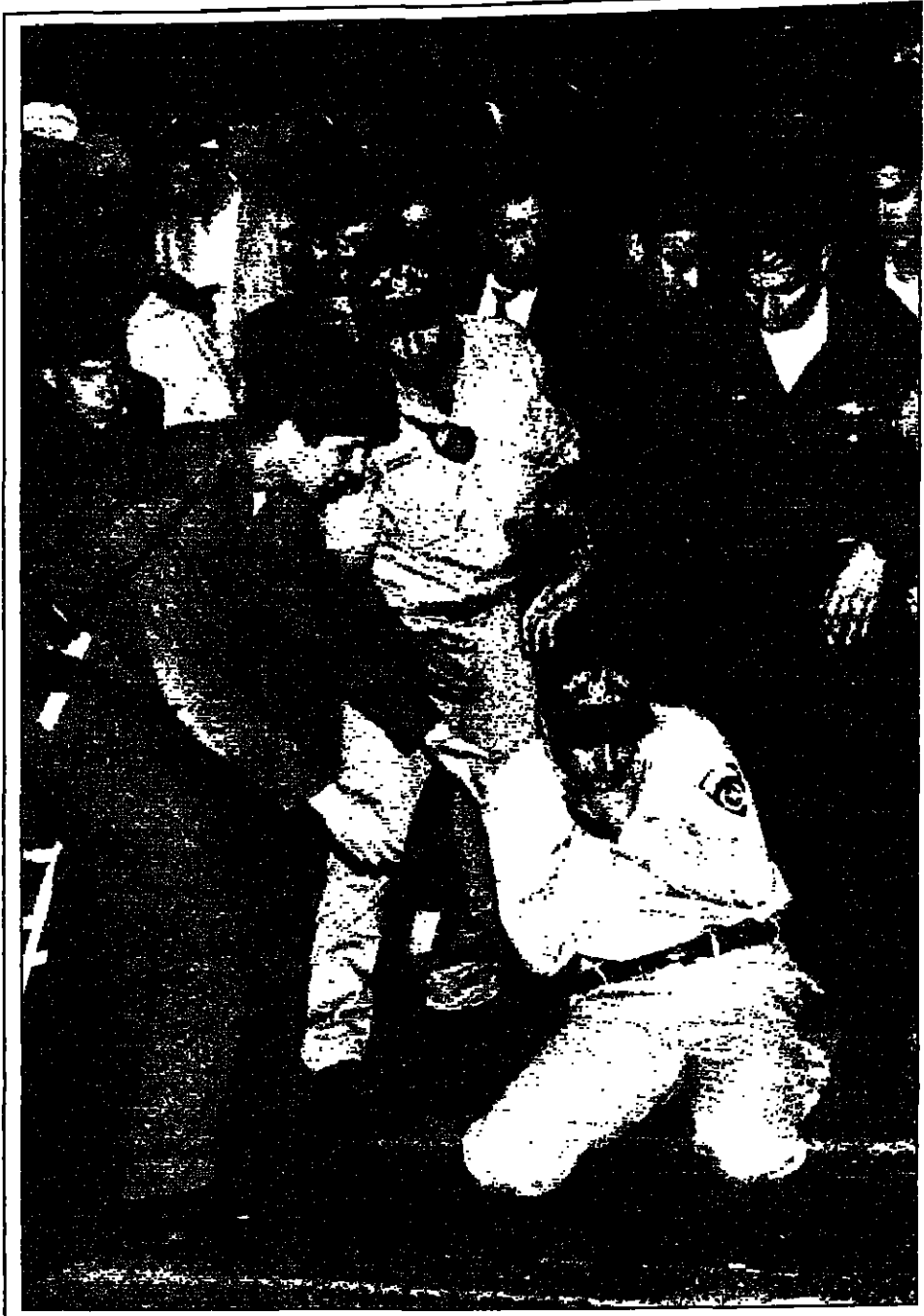
Lebanese are involved in business throughout Africa, and in Zaire, many have taken part in the lucrative diamond trade.

In a swift seven-month offensive, rebels loyal to Laurent Kabila have seized nearly half of Zaire, including Mbuji-Mayi, in their quest to oust President Mobutu Sese Seko from power.

There were unconfirmed reports in Lebanese newspapers that the rebels are also holding hostage 46 Lebanese businessmen.

On Saturday, an Egyptian military plane evacuated 51 Egyptian citizens from Zaire, Egyptian newspapers reported. Most of those interviewed by the newspapers were diplomats or their relatives.

The group included a coach of Zaire's national karate team, Al Akbar newspaper reported.



Israeli police rush to the aid of a colleague injured by stone-throwing ultra-orthodox Jews trying to close Bar Ilan Street, a main Jerusalem thoroughfare, which the high court ruled should remain open on the Sabbath, on Sunday (Reuters photo)

Sfeir says Pope's trip next month expected to highlight Lebanese hardships

BEIRUT (AFP) — The head of the Maronite Christian Church said Saturday that the visit next month by Pope John Paul II to Lebanon would show the world the country is still occupied and its independence under threat.

"The visit of the Pope will allow journalists from around the world to remember that Lebanon is destroyed, its territory occupied, its people oppressed, its wishes paralysed, its sovereignty trampled upon and its independence under threat," said Cardinal Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir.

The cardinal, speaking in a meeting at the Maronite patriarchate in Bkerke north of Beirut, said the Pope's visit on May 10 and 11 could have positive long term effects for the country.

"The Pope is known for his love of the truth, and even the former leaders of the Soviet Union admitted that his stances helped to stamp out communism," said Cardinal Sfeir.

"The Pope, who follows the Lebanese issue carefully, is convinced that Lebanon can play an important role in the Middle East through a harmonious and equal relationship between Muslims and Christians," he added.

The Israeli army has occupied a border strip in South Lebanon since 1985, while Syria maintains 35,000 soldiers and security agents in the country and has a firm grip on the levers of power in Beirut.

Cardinal Sfeir, head of the largest Christian community in Lebanon, also said the Pope would announce the conclusions of the synod held on Lebanon at the Vatican in 1995.

He said the synod had called for Israeli and Syrian troops to leave Lebanon, and for Lebanese Christians who fled the country during the 1975-1990 civil war to return.

Israel transferred to South Africa nuclear knowhow — Haaretz

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel helped South Africa to develop nuclear weapons in the 1970s and early 1980s, the Haaretz newspaper quoted South African officials as saying Sunday.

Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad told the daily he had "numerous reports on relations between academics from the two countries and on (nuclear) cooperation between the two to develop specific equipment."

He said the cooperation concerned "the military domain."

"Nuclear cooperation between the two countries was top secret and many documents were destroyed," he added.

Mr. Pahad also told Haaretz that South Africa carried out a nuclear test on September 1979. At the time, a U.S. spy satellite spotted a "flash" off the South African coast.

His comments contradict statements by ex-President Frederik de Klerk, who said South Africa's former apartheid regime never carried out nuclear testing or cooperated with another country to develop its nuclear programme.

A former South African chief-of-staff and a member of the country's atomic energy commission confirmed to Haaretz that nuclear cooperation took place with Israel.

"We wanted to obtain information in the nuclear domain at any price, including from Israel," the ex-chiefs-of-staff said.

The newspaper also quoted foreign publications which said that Israel acquired 550 tonnes of uranium ore from South Africa over the years and used it in its Dimona nuclear power plant in southern Israel.

In exchange, the publications said, Israel supplied South Africa with information and material to increase the destructive power of nuclear warheads.

Israel has never acknowledged that it has nuclear weapons, with various governments saying only that it would not be the first to introduce nuclear arms into the Middle East.

According to foreign military experts, Israel has up to 200 nuclear warheads.

Anyone eligible to live in Israel under the Law of Return would be exempted from the legislation.

"So what happens if a company like GM wants to buy some land here and then build a factory on it, are we going to say: 'I'm sorry but you're not Jewish'?" added Mr. Poraz.

Several start-up companies have been set up to make the purchases, according to Mr. Sharon, who refused to go into details during the meeting which discussing the reform of the Israel Lands Administration (ILA), as proposed by the Ronen Committee last week. "This is not the appropriate time," he said, but invited Mr. Poraz to a private discussion of the issue.

The ILA will not adopt the recommendations of the Ronen Committee on land ownership and usage during its board meeting on Sunday, Mr. Sharon told the committee.

First talks will be held on the proposed reforms between his ministry and Kibbutz movement representatives and delegates from the Jewish National Fund.

C8 COLUMN

British prince for rent

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's Prince Michael of Kent, a cousin of Queen Elizabeth II, is offering himself for rent to businesses for \$100,000 a year, it was reported here Sunday. "Prince Michael would prefer to be retained on a yearly retainer of about \$100,000, payable quarterly or half-yearly in advance," the Observer newspaper reported citing a memo leaked to it from a political lobbyist. The Prince's status means he often attends state banquets, where he meets world leaders in politics and business. His activities caused concern last October when he was received in China by the highest officials in a trip paid for by British Telecom, which has potential interests in Hong Kong. He was accused at the time of being "tacky" with his royal credentials.

Statue of Roman emperor returns

ROME (AFP) — After a 16-year absence, the statue of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius returned to once again dominate the centre of Rome's Capitoline Hill. However, the emperor and his steed now on display is not the original second-century bronze sculpture, but a copy. The original statue of Marcus Aurelius, cast in the second century but later mounted on a plinth by Michelangelo, was removed in 1981 after a bomb attack against the municipality in 1979. Suffering the ravages of the weather and pollution, it was restored and relocated in the Capitoline Museum, near the square.

Michael Jackson comments on wax double

PARIS (AFP) — Michael Jackson was greeted in Paris Saturday by several hundred fans, some of whom had waited since 5 a.m., as he inaugurated an effigy of himself at the French Waxworks Museum, the Musee Grevin. "So nice," was the self-styled King of Pop's only comment on his wax double, which incidentally is based on Jackson's current look, not on his appearance in the days when he was with the Jackson Five.

Dutch queen may abdicate at 65 — poll

HAGUE (AFP) — A majority of Dutch people believe that Queen Beatrix should abdicate in favour of her son when she reaches the age of 65, according to a poll published Saturday. The poll, published in the Protestant newspaper Trouw, said 65 per cent of those questioned think she should hand over the crown to Prince Willem Alexander in 2003. Around 25 per cent think she should follow the example of her mother, Princess Juliana, and abdicate at the age of 70. Four per cent want the Queen to continue in office until she dies; another four per cent say she should quit immediately; and two per cent say she should have abdicated already.

Pensioner carried hand grenade 'for self-defence'

CHISINAU (AFP) — Moldovan transport police detained a 70-year-old woman who carried a hand grenade "for self-defence" in her shopping basket, Inter-Tass news agency said. "I carry it around because there is so much hooliganism around and you can't expect people to come to your help," it quoted her as saying. The police detained the woman after receiving a tip-off that a dangerous criminal was riding a suburban train in Chisinau, capital of the former Soviet republic. Tass said she had obtained the grenade from a passer-by in exchange for half a litre of "Samagana" (home distilled alcohol). Police confiscated the grenade and released the woman with a warning, it added.

Former U.S. president in Sudan for peace talks

KHARTOUM (AP) — Former President Jimmy Carter met Sudanese leaders and rebel representatives ahead of the scheduled signing of a peace agreement. Sudan's news agency reported Sunday.

Mr. Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, arrived Saturday in Sudan for a week-long trip that will take them to other African countries as well.

The visit follows Mr. Carter's successful trip to Sudan in 1995 when the former president negotiated a cease-fire that lasted for six months. The lull in fighting allowed medical teams to travel to war zones to work on eradicating the Guinea worm disease.

Mr. Carter arrived during a tense time in Sudan following rebel gains in the country's eastern and southern parts. The government has accused Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda of taking part, and Uganda has acknowledged its troops crossed the border.

Sudan's Islamic regime is scheduled to sign a peace agreement Monday with the leaders of four rebel factions that broke with the mainstream Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) rebel group. But their signing is expected to have little

effect on the fighting.

John Garang, whose SPLA commands the largest number of fighters in the south, has refused to sign.

On Saturday, Mr. Carter met Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir and discussed "the peace process in Sudan and the possibility of bringing in other factions," the news agency said.

The agency did not name the rebel representatives Mr. Carter met, but he described all his meetings as positive.

Mr. Carter was also quoted as saying that he discussed "questions of peace between Sudan and its neighbours." He left Sudan on Sunday, but Sudanese officials refused to divulge his destination.

The peace agreement stipulates that after four years, Sudan will hold a referendum in which southerners will decide whether the south should secede or remain part of Sudan.

Rebels have fought the Muslim-dominated government in Khartoum since 1983, seeking a greater say for the Christian and animist south in Sudan's affairs. More than 1.3 million have died in the war and related famines.

Moscow grounds U.S. treasure tour, demands back Romanov jewels for city's 850th birthday

WASHINGTON (R) — A U.S. tour of priceless gowns, icons, portraits and jewels from Russia's imperial era was grounded in Washington Saturday by a demand to return the treasures to Moscow.

Some 80,000 people viewed the exhibit during its display at the Corcoran Gallery of Art here. It was scheduled to go next to Houston. Instead, cars from the Russian embassy have blockaded a moving van loaded with the historic artifacts for four days to prevent it from leaving Washington.

The museum kept Russian state jewels in a vault while waiting for resolution of the dispute. It involves the Russian Ministry of Culture, a government-appointed organising committee and the Washington-based foundation operating the tour.

The ministry has said it wants the treasures for a celebration of the founding of Moscow 850 years ago.

Less noble motives were at play, according to a Houston museum director.

"It's clear this whole thing is about money," Peter Marzio, director of the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, said in Saturday's editions of the Houston Chronicle.

Mr. Marzio told the newspaper that the organising committee had contacted him to see if it could take over the exhibition.

Jewels of the Romanovs: Treasures of the Russian Imperial Court, which would mean breaking an agreement with the American-Russian Cultural Cooperation Foundation.

The foundation has operated the seven-museum tour. It was scheduled for Houston, San Diego and Memphis before closing in early 1998.

James Symington, chairman of the foundation, told the Washington Post that the foundation would "continue to appeal to the highest levels of Russian government to allow the Russian state jewels to stay in the United States and continue its tour and to promote goodwill between the two nations."

Russian embassy officials said the foundation had failed to live up to agreements for operation of the display. The exhibition was timed to commemorate the U.S. visit 125 years ago of Grand Duke Alexis.

The Romanovs ruled Russia for 300 years, ending in the 1917 Communist revolution.

Included in the exhibit were 115 jewels and uncut gems, among them the egg-sized Caesar's ruby and a 260-carat sapphire. There also were ecclesiastical materials, gowns, portraits and archival items relating to the Grand Duke's visit.

It was widely reported the exhibition was worth \$100 million but one museum official said the unique and historical nature of the items made them priceless.

"Our position is we're not releasing it to anybody until we either get a court order or both sides settle their dispute," said a spokeswoman for the Corcoran Gallery.

There were unconfirmed reports in Lebanese newspapers that the rebels are also holding hostage 46 Lebanese businessmen.

On Saturday, an Egyptian military plane evacuated 51 Egyptian citizens from Zaire, Egyptian newspapers reported. Most of those interviewed by the newspapers were diplomats or their relatives.

The group included a coach of Zaire's national karate team, Al Akbar newspaper reported.

There were unconfirmed reports in Lebanese newspapers that the rebels are also holding hostage 46 Lebanese businessmen.

On Saturday, an Egyptian military plane evacuated 51 Egyptian citizens from Zaire, Egyptian newspapers reported. Most of those interviewed by the newspapers were diplomats or their relatives.

The group included a coach of Zaire's national karate team, Al Akbar newspaper reported.

There were unconfirmed reports in Lebanese newspapers that the rebels are also holding hostage 46 Lebanese businessmen.

On Saturday, an Egyptian military plane evacuated 51 Egyptian citizens from Zaire, Egyptian newspapers reported. Most of those interviewed by the newspapers were diplomats or their relatives.

The group included a coach of Zaire's national karate team, Al Akbar newspaper reported.